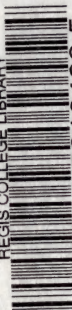


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A BOOK OF ANGELS



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HEAD OF AN ANGEL.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
E. G. P. AND I. E. H.
WHO IN THEIR LIVES
WERE BEAUTIFUL AND HELPFUL
AS ANGELS
AND WITH THE ANGELS
NOW DWELL
IN THE LIGHT

EDITOR'S PREFACE

IN a book devoted to one subject by several writers there must needs be some reiteration of theme ; but, as every mind sees a subject differently, the light thrown on it may, for this very reason, be particularly valuable, and reiteration be in that case not a loss but a gain.

To secure this as much as possible has been the aim and endeavour of the present collection, and if here and there appears even some divergence of view, it will not on so high a subject be unwelcome or strange, provided that no clearly revealed principles of Holy Scripture are left out of consideration, a risk which I trust will be found to have been guarded against in the following work.

It is necessary, however, just to say that each writer is of course responsible only for his own contribution.

I am quite unable adequately to thank those who have so willingly helped me by writing the various papers which appear in this volume. This is especially the case in regard to one friend, without whose

help and sympathy the book would hardly have come to its present form.

I must also thank both friends and publishers for allowing me to give the extracts which will be found in this book :

The Bishop of Rochester and the Editor of the 'Guardian': for permission to reprint part of the Bishop's Sermon at the Weymouth Congress.

Messrs. Longmans, Green, and Co. : for Bishop Moberly's Sermons, J. H. Newman's 'Dream of Gerontius' and University Sermons ; and, with the Rev. J. O. Johnston, Dr. Liddon's works.

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Mr. J. Parker : for Sermons by Canon T. T. Carter and Dean Randall.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge : for Christina Rossetti's 'The Face of the Deep' ; and, with Miss Church, for Dean Church's 'Message of Peace.'

The Master and Fellows of Trinity Hall, Cambridge : for Henry Latham's 'A Service of Angels.'

L. P.

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O EVERLASTING GOD, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order ; Mercifully grant, that as Thy holy Angels alway do Thee service in Heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth ; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

INTRODUCTORY

FROM A SERMON BY THE LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER
BEFORE THE CHURCH CONGRESS AT WEYMOUTH,
1905.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.—St. Matt. vi. 10.

THE season of Michaelmas reminds us of those beings who, created, as we are, immortal, like ourselves, sharing with us the attributes of intelligence, volition, and spiritual apprehension, are, unlike us, disembodied and invisible to the eyes of mortal sense, and so occupy an intermediate sphere between the Divine and the human. It has been truly said that the weak hold which the average man maintains upon the doctrine of the existence of Angels arises not so much from a difficulty of the reason as from a lack of the imagination. For surely when the microscope reveals to our gaze myriad forms of life, descending from man through countless gradations down to the protoplasm, reason should prepare us to believe in similar ranks of created beings, moving upwards to

bridge over the void which separates imperfect man from God Almighty, All-good and All-intelligent. For why should we admit that nature below us teems with life and yet predicate an absolute blank between ourselves and God? Why should the exuberant fertility of the great Creator be arrested at that point when man appears upon the scene and first unites in himself the material and the spiritual? And if reason thus suggests a continuance of developed life, how else than by a chain of spiritual, disembodied beings should we expect that God, Who is Himself pure Spirit, would continue the upward scale of existences from man, who, by virtue of his composite nature, stands at the head of the material world, and yet contains within himself a spirit-life, an immortal soul? 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him? Thou madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship.' Thus, when logic invites and science—unveiling the Creator's law of progressive life—confirms our belief in angelic beings, we welcome as natural revelation's clear insistence upon this fact, and it is, to repeat Dr. Liddon's words, a lack of imagination mainly which precludes us from assigning to angel-life its proper place in our consideration and our thoughts. The Bible, we admit, is full of angelic visitations, and nowhere fuller than in the New Testament, and thus

any haunting disquietude lest angels, like fairies, be but the figment of the misty-morning period of the childhood of humanity, and must pass away under the clearer light of midday knowledge, is at once dispelled. Insisted on and developed by our Blessed Lord and Master, accepted without question by the inspired Apostles, vouched for by many an appearance recorded by evangelists and the author of the Acts of the Apostles, occupying a prominent place in the apocalyptic vision of St. John the Divine, the doctrine of the existence of angels and of their intervention in human affairs has too authoritative a sanction to be treated as an open question in the faith of Christendom. And if any of us be tempted to say that, be that as it may, we can afford here to set aside our belief as visionary and impractical, too shadowy to call for serious consideration at this stage of our existence, we are at once arrested and brought to our true bearings by the suffrage which we repeat each day from the lips of our Divine Master: 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' For, if these words have meaning in them, they must assert that the worship and ministry of the angels to-day in heaven is to form the model and the ideal for the Church on earth. How then, I ask, can we conscientiously repeat this prayer day after day without a thought of that standard of obedience and of service which our Blessed Lord sets before us now for our constant imitation?

And what do they teach us ? First, the necessity of the completest organisation. The angels are revealed to us in Holy Scripture not as a 'mixed multitude,' but as warriors marshalled in their ranks. 'More than twelve legions of angels,' such is our Lord's description of the forces at His command, to be summoned, had He wished it, by a single prayer to His Divine Father. And St. Paul, who was himself at one time caught up into the third heaven, speaks of the various orders in the angelic hierarchy with the confidence of one who knew the truth of what he affirmed.

But the angels are not only organised for ministrations ; they are eager students of theology. In a well-known passage St. Peter speaks of the mystery of the Atonement as among those subjects which 'the angels desire to look into.' Have we nothing to learn here, that so the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven ? Is the systematised study of the principles of our faith what it ought to be—nay, even what it once was in this land ?

'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'

Work and prayer go ever hand in hand here on earth, as there where the angels stand to do God's will above, and where they rest not day and night in that perfect service which calls into play each power and touches in turn each note to evoke the music of that perfect harmony—the harmony of a surrendered life.

CHAPTER I

The Angel of the Presence

The Angel of the Presence

As through the wilderness the People went,
Leaving reluctantly the world behind,
Lest they should falter God His Angel sent
And fed the flame of hope in their dull mind.

A Fire by night His gracious Presence burned,
A Cloud by day He moved before their eyes ;
None from the path of safety need have turned,
None have come short in His great enterprise.

Just to have known themselves to be but men,
Just to have let Him lead them by His hand,
Just to have had a little faith, and then
All had come safely to the Promised Land !

And yet they failed. O, by their failure teach
Those that come after, in the same distress,
More faithfully to follow till they reach
The land that lies beyond the wilderness.

The Angel of the Presence

It was well and tersely stated long ago by a notable student and teacher of God's word: 'The New Testament lies hid in the Old: the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.' We believe it would be no less true to say that in the Old Testament the Eternal Word, the Son of God, is veiled under the appearance of the Angel of the Lord—sent by Jehovah, yet speaking and acting as if He were Himself Jehovah—and revealed in the New Testament as Jesus the Saviour of Mankind. In the great promise committed to Israel by the prophet who closes the canon of the ancient Scriptures, the Holy Spirit sets His seal to the identity of the Angel of the Covenant, whom Isaiah before had referred to as the Angel of the Presence, and whom Moses had known as the Angel of the Lord and worshipped as Jehovah, with the mysterious Being who should come to redeem Israel and the world: 'The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith

the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? '1

The term Angel, or Messenger, as it is here translated, is neither in this passage nor elsewhere distinctive of nature, but of office. It is applied to one who acts for another as ambassador or apostle, whether man or angel; even as Christ speaks of Himself as sent of the Father, and is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle of our Christian confession. Nor does the designation Angel imply any manifestation in form, such as popular imagination ascribes to angels, with accompaniment of wings or strangeness of aspect. The Angel of the Lord did, indeed, call to Moses out of the bush wrapt in flame yet not consumed; but, when He appeared to Abraham or Joshua, it was in the likeness of man, so that the patriarch addressed Him as a traveller, who had come to his tent needing refreshment and hospitality.² As a matter of fact, it is as men in shining garments that even other angel-messengers are seen after the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. That great angel also, who stands in the presence of God and was sent to the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth, is called in the book of Daniel '*the man Gabriel*.'³ Moreover, it is quite in harmony with the gracious purpose of the Eternal Son to take upon Him through the seed of Abraham the nature of man,

¹ Malachi iii. 1, 2.

² Gen. xviii. 3-5.

³ Dan. ix. 21.

that He should prepare the world for such an approach on the part of God to man, by clothing Himself as with light, so especially with the likeness of that form of man, which He meant to wear on earth and for ever in heaven, and which may, for all that we know, best correspond to the spiritual reality of the Image of God, after which man was originally created. It is, of course, quite beyond our power even to imagine how such a likeness was assumed, or what relation it could bear, as a temporary vesture, to the Personality behind it. It may possibly have manifested, when He willed, some radiance of unearthly beauty or expression of Divine Majesty. The wife of Manoah tells her husband of His countenance, 'as the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible,'¹ and Nebuchadnezzar, though he speaks of seeing four men, yet adds 'The form (or look) of the fourth is like a son of the gods.'²

But the great point, that is so interesting and helpful for us to dwell upon, is that the *character* of the Angel of the Lord, as manifested in its grace and truth and kindness towards man—especially towards the sinful and weak and out of the way—is so entirely at one in its main features with the mind of God as revealed by Christ when men 'beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'³ It is worthy

¹ Judges xiii. 6. ² Daniel iii. 25, R.V. ³ St. John i. 14.

of note that the first recorded appearance of the Angel of the Lord, under that name (in the chapter immediately following one in which the term 'Word of God' almost suggests personality), is in connection with His visit to the fugitive bondmaid Hagar, when 'the Angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness,' and questioned her: 'Whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?'¹ This, and His subsequent dealing with Hagar when Sarah had finally cast her out, put side by side, may be compared with the later manifestation of the Christ to the woman of Samaria by the well of Jacob. In both instances He surprises us by using up, so to speak, one of the few opportunities which He gives for His revelation of the Divine, in the one case with an outcast Egyptian bondmaid, in the other with a woman of Samaria with whom the Jews would have no dealings. On both occasions He reveals His perfect insight into all the life and circumstances, which pressed so heavily upon the hearts of the women; so much so that Hagar called the Name of the Lord that spake unto her *Thou God seest me*²—'Thou art the God of seeing,' and the Samaritan woman was most impressed by her experience of His personal knowledge: '*He told me all that ever I did.*'³ In connection with both manifestations there is associated with the nearness of the Lord the outward

¹ Gen. xvi. 7, 8.² Gen. xvi. 13.³ St. John iv. 29.

symbol of the fountain of life, type of the living water which the two women alike so profoundly needed. In His words to both of these, whose spiritual thirst He would quench, there is the claim for more than human power and authority. Who else but the Lord of life, spiritual and physical, could make of Hagar's seed, as He declared He meant to do, a great nation not to be numbered for multitude ; or claim for Himself the title of the Christ and the power of giving the heavenly ' water springing up into everlasting life ' ?

These same traits of human interest and sympathy in union with august claims to Divine worship and to supreme authority, are attributed quite naturally in various accounts of His actions and words to Him to whom St. Stephen refers¹ as having spoken with the voice of the Lord from the bush, and in the Mount Sina to Moses, when He claimed for Himself the incommunicable Name and such worship as could not be offered to any creature in any capacity without idolatry. It is not to be wondered at that, having learnt throughout their history something of His truth and lovingkindness, the people of Israel made sure that they would delight in Him—love to have Him with them—aye ! they would certainly seek His Face, the manifestation of His glory and His grace. They would look for His coming as for the rising of a Sun of

¹ Acts vii. 30-33, 38.

Righteousness, and for His healing with gracious fostering beams the sad and drooping life of Israel.

But they knew not what or whom they were seeking, though they might have known His character better than they did ; His coming could only be a joy to such as would offer themselves to be purified from sin. ‘ Who shall stand when He appeareth ? ’ Not those who would insist on some sign from heaven, such as a visible escort of ten thousands of angels, albeit the Messenger of the Covenant might indeed be Captain of the armies of Heaven, and twelve legions of them could be had for the asking. On the contrary the Lord would come to His Temple *suddenly*, that is, all unawares to them, because of His humanness and humility, in a very different guise from their idea of the pomp and circumstance befitting so divine an advent. He would be in their midst before more than a few would be at all aware that He was at hand. Yet the manner of His coming would almost naturally be the consummation of earlier visits.

In the manifestation of the Angel of Jehovah to Abraham and the Patriarchs, and in His great Revelation of Himself to Moses, it is especially in the Name of Jehovah, as the Angel of the Covenant, that He draws near, preparing the chosen family and nation to be heirs of the eternal purpose of blessing and the Home of the Incarnation. And

in His coming it is abundantly clear that no other than the Lord Himself draws near.

As Abraham is sitting at his tent door¹ he is aware of three men who stand by him ; and, by and by, one of the three employs the language and assumes the authority of a Being greater than the angels by whom He is attended, even of the Lord for whom nothing is too hard and no self-abasement in love too low. As Lord of all life He promises that Sarah shall have a son ; and, anticipating His own sublime treatment of His Apostles as friends, He does not hide His counsel from Abraham His friend. As a Person with a person He is entreated by His creature as the Judge of all the earth, who will do right, but who is willing that mercy should prevail against judgment, so long as the law of holy love is honoured. Later on, knowing what He would do just as clearly as when He told His disciples of His coming crucifixion, He tries and proves Abraham, who, perhaps, when he saw fathers and mothers around giving their firstborn for the sin of their soul, wondered whether he really loved his God, and could give up his best and dearest as they were ready to do. The institution of sacrifice had been perverted, as all true things are, by Satan, yet it embodied a principle underlying the everlasting relations between man and God, and especially of sinful man with the Holy God. As the Revealing

¹ Genesis xviii.

Angel He set forth in a figure the great day of Christ seen from afar, and before it had yet dawned, when He should be lifted up and glorified. Through a prophetic action, He gave a pledge of the eternal purpose of God in the Atonement, to be wrought out in time by the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world, when in the person of Isaac all Israel was in a mystery laid upon the Altar of God. It was the Angel of the Lord who called unto Abraham out of heaven,—and no words ever addressed to man could be more solemn, more entirely the words of God Himself than those He utters¹: ‘By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.’

Apart from its heights and depths of awful significance, one result of this ‘greatest deed which did not become a deed’ wrought at the bidding of the Angel of God was, that, while we meet with human sacrifices for the honour and propitiation of the Deity amongst almost all the nations of the

¹ Gen. xxii. 15-18.

ancient world, Israel alone, so far as it did not lapse into heathenism, forms a striking exception.

Throughout Jacob's life it is the Angel, as he confesses,¹ who redeems him from all evil and leads him all the years of his pilgrimage, educating his character out of its meanness into princely power with God, even as He would afterwards patiently train the nation itself. The Angel of God is in fact identified² with the God of Bethel, who stood above the mystic stairs, sloping up from earth to heaven, on which were seen the hosts of God ascending and descending upon the child of man; nor can we be in the dark, after what Hosea tells us, as to whether it was this same Angel who allowed His omnipotency to be overmatched by man's weakness at Peniel³: 'By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and then He spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial.'

Passing on through the bondage of Israel in Egypt, that horror of darkness felt beforehand by Abraham,⁴ let us with Moses turn aside to see the great sight on Mount Horeb. It is the Shechinah or pillar of fire in which the bush is wrapped but not consumed. And out of the flame, the voice

¹ Gen. xlviii. 15, 16.

² Gen. xxxi. 11, 13.

³ Hosea xii. 3-5.

⁴ Gen. xv. 12, 13.

of the Angel of the Lord. He is called and calls Himself by the name and attributes of Jehovah, and demands all the reverence with which the Most High is worshipped. We mark in Him the same wonderful contrasts of character and attributes, in a deep underlying unity, as we have noted before. He reveals Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Rock on which all being rests throughout eternity, the spiritual Rock of His people,¹ the unchangeable 'I am,' yet One who may be known more and more as He reveals Himself by word and deed, even as the disciples who believed in Jesus believed yet more when He had manifested His glory at Cana of Galilee. He knows all the sorrows of His people, now become a nation, as He had known those of Hagar and Jacob, and they will learn to say of Him with the prophet²: 'In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.'

In the unveiling of His name of Jehovah and of the purpose of redemption, He presides over the institution of Sacrifice and the Ordinances of the earthly tabernacle, the shadow and likeness of the true Tabernacle of which He is now the Minister; and the order of Priesthood which will be summed up and fulfilled in Him. It is He, the Angel of

¹ 1 Cor. x. 4.

² Isaiah lxiii. 9.

the Face or Presence, and not, as Moses feared it would be at one time, a created angel, who is tried and proved in the wilderness,¹ whose Presence goes with Israel on its journey. It is no other than He who at the threshold of the Land of Promise shows Himself before the walls of Jericho to Joshua as a man with a drawn sword in His hand, declaring Himself to be the captain of Jehovah's hosts.² As such He proves Himself to be the Lord mighty in battle on behalf of His people so long as they are true to His laws of righteousness and truth, and is seen in the vision of Isaiah to receive the worship of Seraphim as the Lord of Hosts.³ He camps around the just, with angels ascending or descending, whether the Hope of the future is represented by a single wanderer like Jacob, or by a whole nation, when to the eyes that are opened the mountain is seen to be full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about. He is leader of the armies on behalf of His Kingdom upon earth; but He is no less the giver of repentance, as in the remarkable appeal, recorded in the Book of Judges, which the Angel of the Lord reproachfully addresses to the children of Israel at the place of weeping⁴: 'I made you to go up,' He says to them, 'out of Egypt, and have brought you into the land which I swear unto your fathers;

¹ 1 Cor. x.

² Joshua v. 13, 14.

³ Isaiah vi. 1-3.

⁴ Judges ii. 1, 2.

. . . but ye have not obeyed My voice : why have ye done this ? ’

Under different circumstances, but with a like consistency to the unvarying principles of regard for truth and holiness, and condescension to the weakness of man, the Angel of the Lord is recorded as having visited Gideon in a day of Israel’s sore affliction. A prophet had prepared His way by preaching repentance, and then the Angel of the Lord Himself appeared¹ with the announcement ‘The Lord is with thee.’ Still referring to the Angel, the narrator tells us : ‘The Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might . . . have not I sent thee ? ’ After the sacrifice is accepted and the Altar raised to the Divine Messenger under the title of ‘The Lord our Peace,’ his mission is confirmed to Gideon by the signs of the wet and dry fleece, and the victory is gained over Midian with the war cry, ‘The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.’

Once more, as before Sodom and Gomorrha, so upon Jerusalem, after David’s sin of numbering the people,² this same Angel of the Lord, who has executed judgment through one of His ministering angels, Himself stands at the threshing-floor to receive and hearken to the supplication of the King. And on the mountain of Abraham’s sacrifice,³ where

¹ Judges vi. 12, 14, 24.

² 1 Chron. xxi. 16.

³ 1 Chron. xxii. 1.

of old He was moved to mercy, the Altar is raised to be the centre of Israel's worship, until the Lord whom they sought, the Messenger of the Covenant whom they made their delight, should at the last come to His Temple.

Before the Old Testament closes with this promise, we have a vision, given by the prophet Zechariah,¹ of Joshua the representative of Israel's restored Priesthood standing before the Angel of the Lord, a fitting object in his filthy garments, as it would seem, for just accusation by Satan. But the Angel becomes the Advocate to take the part of those who have turned to Him and plead the Holy Covenant. He rebukes the adversary, clothes His servant again with white raiment, and assures Him with the comfortable words, which only the Holy One of God has any right to use : ' I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.' The Angel of the Lord protests unto Joshua with a promise of confidence for the present and the hope of much greater things to come.

From first to last, whenever He comes forth, whether for revelation or for action, to an individual or to the nation which He has formed and guarded, with a message of mercy or of judgment, the Angel of the Lord is one and the same in character ; and in that wonderful union of divine and human attributes of majesty and mercy, we recognise the

¹ Zech. iii.

spiritual lineaments of Him whom Malachi bade his people look for as the Angel of the Covenant, the Faithful and True, no other than the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, who alone has declared and revealed the Glory of God.

If not He, who else could it have been? Two alternatives have indeed been proposed. The first involves a theory which is surely quite impossible to accept if we hold that it was the special mission of the Jewish Church to assert the absolute supremacy of the One God, on which our Lord based the law of worship: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'¹ It has been suggested that the Angel of the Lord was a created angel, invested temporarily, for a particular occasion, with the name and honour of the Divine Being. But it is impossible that any created being could assume the titles and claims which the Angel of the Lord is recorded as doing, without presumptuously usurping the prerogatives of the supreme God. And how could the Jewish Church, or any member of it, have been encouraged by such records to offer worship, which could only be rendered to the Most High, without incurring the guilt of idolatry, the sin from first to last in Israel's history most strongly reprobated and denounced?

The second alternative is a view which probably

¹ St. Matt. iv. 10.

and not unnaturally was generally taken by the Church of the Old Covenant, whose special witness was to the Unity of God—that the Angel of the Lord was the one only Jehovah in personal manifestation, the one only God in active energy of visitation. In this relation, as drawing near to man, He would be one and the same Person as the Father of the spirits of all flesh, whom, apart from such manifestation, no man hath seen or can see. This theory would account for the claims to the prerogatives and attributes of Godhead constantly made by the Angel of Jehovah, but leaves unexplained the very clear utterances of distinction of Persons, as, for example, when the Angel of the Lord speaks of Himself as sent by Jehovah, and at the same time as being Himself Jehovah. Such a distinction of Persons could not indeed have been consciously present to the Jewish mind, but it was stored up in the sacred records, waiting to be interpreted by the subsequent history of revelation, until it was fulfilled through the Incarnation. The wonder of the Old Testament is that it was adequate for revelation with practical messages to the faithful for their own dispensation, and yet guarded as a hidden treasure the deepest truths of God and man and their true relation to one another, to be afterwards disclosed in the fulness of time. This is a most convincing evidence for its Divine authority,

which has to be recognised no less than the human element so strongly emphasised by recent criticism.

A revelation such as was given in the days of old by the Angel of the Lord answered the great need of the human heart in maintaining union with God and fellowship with heaven, while it prepared the way for faith in the Incarnation of the Eternal Son. As Professor Ramsay says : ' The problem which was constantly present to the ancient mind in thinking of the relation of man to God ' is expressed in ' the question, How can the gulf which divides human nature from the Divine Nature be bridged over ? How can God become in effective relation to man ? '

The myths and legends of the old world, with their tales of appearances and visits of the gods, may be taken either as perversions of a true tradition or of an instinctive anticipation of the human mind framing its hopes for the future under these distorted images.

The character of the Old Testament manifestations in contrast with the legends of paganism is seen in the sublime dignity and uncompromising holiness of the Person who visits man, no less than in the human sympathy and condescension to man adapted to the actual state of his development. It helped to save humanity through the chosen people from despair and recklessness when it was

tempted to echo the cry of the apostates in the prophet's vision, 'The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.'¹

A. B. W., *Bp.*

Notes

Dr. Pusey in Lectures VIII. and IX. on the *Book of Daniel*, pp. 517-529, seems to take the view that 'The Angel of the Lord' throughout the Old Testament is probably a created Angel, with special Divine Presence. But he suggests that in him 'God accustomed His creatures to the thought of beholding Himself in human form'; and some of his remarks are difficult to reconcile with any theory of this Angel being other than the Son of God.

Dr. Liddon in his Bampton Lectures on the *Divinity of our Lord* tells us (Lecture II. 1, β) that the earliest fathers answered the question, Who was the Angel? with general unanimity that he was the Word or Son of God Himself. It was the Arian controversy which probably led to the adoption of the theory that the Theophanies were not direct appearances of a Person in the Godhead, but self-manifestations of God through a created being.

Canon Cheyne has lately in his *Bible Problems* (Note iv. to p. 73) put forth a theory that the Being resembling a son of man in Dan. vii. 13 is to be identified both with the Messiah and with the 'great prince' Michael, and that Michael is no other than the Babylonian Marduk or Merodack, apparently taken over by Hebrew theology! He accepts as a fact that 'the Angel of Yahwè is not a mere messenger of Yahwè, but equivalent to Yahwè or Elohim himself.'

In the article on 'Angel,' § ii., by Dr. A. B. Davidson, in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, it is allowed that the 'Angel of the Lord is a self-manifestation of God.' The 'Angel of His face (presence) is not one who sees His face or stands before it, but one in whom His face (presence) is reflected and seen.'

¹ Ezek. ix. 9.

CHAPTER II

A Survey of Scripture References to Angelic Administrations

Up to such myriads do these natures mount,
That they surpass our finite faculties ;
Nor tongue, nor fancy may their numbers count.

DANTE.



ANGELS IN THE LANTERN. ELY CATHEDRAL.

(S. G. W. & S. G. W. 1885.)

THINE Angels, Christ ! we laud in solemn lays,
Our elder brethren of the crystal sky.
Who 'mid Thy glory's blaze
The ceaseless anthems raise,
And gird Thy Throne in faithful ministry.

We celebrate their love, whose viewless wing
Hath left for us so oft their mansion high,
The mercies of their King
To mortal saints to bring
Or guard the couch of slumbering infancy.

But Thee the First and Last, we glorify,
Who, when Thy world was sunk in death and sin,
Not with Thine hierarchy,
The armies of the sky,
But didst with Thine own arm the battle win.

Therefore, with angels and archangels we
To Thy dear love our thankful chorus raise,
And tune our songs to Thee
Who art, and art to be,
And, endless as Thy mercies, sound Thy praise !

Bishop Reginald Heber (1783-1826).

A Survey of Scripture References to Angelic Administrations

It would be an inadequate description of the Holy Scriptures to say that they are a revelation concerning God and man. They are as truly a revelation concerning the angels. And this not merely indirectly, as the angels are connected with us, but directly, as to themselves, irrespectively of us. The original contest between the good and evil angels,—the difference as to the present condition of the one portion of the heavenly host, who ‘kept their first estate,’ and of the others who fell,—these facts of their history are clearly revealed to us.

It has been attempted to resolve angelic appearances into mere subjective visions of the mind itself, illusory forms projected by the heated and devout imagination, through its own creative energy, or to account for them objectively by the supposition of the Divine power giving mere temporary visible shapes to a Divine message, forming a kind of phantasmagoria of an inner world, produced for the occasion, in order to impress the outward sense more vividly than by mere words.

That we are indeed entirely unable to explain how the angels' spiritual bodies (for bodies of some refined subtlety they have ever been supposed to possess) can be adapted to human organs of sight, that we can form no real idea even of such a possibility, is evident. But it would be unreasonable to doubt the possibility of God causing them, as He will, to appear to whom He will, or to give power to human eyes to discern their more subtle forms, imparting temporary visibility to what ordinarily would be invisible. And surely the attempt to explain these mysterious appearances on the theory of subjective ideas, or temporary phantom shapes, is wholly forced, is simply to take Holy Scripture in a non-natural sense, and is unphilosophical, as being manifestly inadequate to account for the undeniable phenomena of the case.

For it is not merely the appearances of angels to prophets and seers in ecstasy; not merely the occurrence of their presence in the poetical books of Scripture; not merely communications from God to the mind of lonely watchers, and meditative hermits, such as the forms arrayed in gorgeous light and awful grandeur, which appeared to Daniel when he prostrated himself and fell as one dead, on the banks of 'the river Ulai,'¹ for which we have to account. The visits of the angels are described equally in prosaic historical books. Nothing can

¹ Daniel viii. 2.

be more naturally interwoven with the ordinary narrative of common events than a great proportion of the angelic appearances recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, such as the angel that appeared to Hagar ¹ in the wilderness, or the two who went down to Sodom to rescue Lot ² and destroy those doomed cities, or the angel that met Balaam by the way.³ Nor were these appearances visible merely at particular crises, as, *e.g.*, times of religious excitement, when men are specially open to dream dreams, and indulge in exaggerations of idea and visionary conceptions; or periods of darker intelligence, when men are specially subject to hallucinations and superstitious belief as to invisible presences. The appearances of angels extend throughout the Scriptures. They people the scenes of the sacred history, indeed, more fully at one period of man's history than another; but only with such differences as are readily accounted for by the more or less urgent call for Divine interpositions, or the greater or less prominence with which the designs of God required to be impressed on the minds of His people. Angels are not more clearly seen around the gates of Paradise, at the beginning of man's history, than they are represented as about to be present at its close. They are as fully concerned with the events of the Revelation of St. John as they are with the events of the Book of

¹ Gen. xvi. 7.

² Gen. xix. 1.

³ Numbers xxii. 22.

Genesis. The Scripture history of mankind opens with the angels already on the stage of this lower world, actively engaged. It is revealed that they will be as actively at work when it has run out its predestined course. The angels indeed group themselves in greater apparent numbers, and seem more intensely employed at certain great crises of our history—as, *e.g.*, on Mount Sinai, during the delivery of the Law—or during the earthly life of the Incarnate God. But the simplest view of Scripture assures us that, from the earliest to the latest epoch of man's destiny, these blessed and glorious beings have a co-ordinate and co-extensive part to play on the same stage of life, in which our own lot and probation are cast.

Moreover, this connection between angels and men is not a mere casual or extraordinary interposition with human affairs, but is evidently an uniform appointment ordered and maintained on a settled plan. Their movements are not mere accidents of our state. To take first the lowest form of their ministration, they are represented as the active agents of the laws of matter, which so closely affect us. They inflict or save from death, as in Egypt during the Exodus. They cause or remove pestilences, as in David's history. They bind or unloose the winds, as in Revelation.

They act, of course, only under the guiding and restraining Will of God. They are subject wholly

to His law. But they are as truly personal agents in the disposition of the subtle organisations and operations of His material kingdoms, within their sphere of power, and are as energetically at work around and within us, as we can be in our own sphere.

But what touches us more deeply, more closely far, is the energy of angelic ministrations in our supernatural life. Throughout the Old Testament there are indications of a constant struggle being maintained on behalf of God's elect by the good angels, who are in constant conflict with the evil angels. On the one side, the side of the evil, there is the constant effort not merely to turn the forces of nature against man, but also to assault him in his inner life, to ruin his spiritual hopes, and mar for ever his glorious destiny. On the other side, the side of the good angels, there is equally a constant counterplotting and earnest antagonistic strife, to maintain the struggling faithful among men, to ward off evil from them, to direct all events to their good, to guide, console, empower, animate them, never leaving them, till the mission of loving sympathy and constant interposition has fulfilled its predestined end. . . .

But more especially we can discern, through the outward veil, the thrill and glow which has ever pervaded the holy angels in fulfilling the charge committed to them in the gradual developing of

the Incarnation of God. Their intense watchfulness to penetrate the secret; their earnest care of those more favoured ones who were preparing the way, as types or forerunners of the Advent of Jesus, as specially shown in the family life of Abraham and Jacob; and then the ecstasy of angelic song which heralded the Nativity of Christ, and their composed, reverent eagerness as they watched around the Sepulchre; and ever afterwards the fervent action of the angels moving with and around our Lord, in the heavenly order of His Life subsequent to His Ascension, of which the visions of St. John speak; and on earth their 'joy over one sinner that repenteth,' their care of 'the little ones' of Christ, and their last office of love to the departing souls of the elect 'carried by the angels' into Paradise,—these revealed representations of their concern in man, thus more constantly and more energetically stirred, prove that a new spring of life and love towards man had been imparted to the angelic natures in union with the Incarnation of God. They are quickened in themselves to a more vivid joy, a more glowing adoration, a more fervent charity towards man as the object of Divine care in Christ; bound to a dearer, more absorbing care, because of the tabernacling of God in human flesh.

The promise given to Nathaniel, as the type of the true Israelite, that he should see 'the angels of

God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,'¹ seems to speak of this new order of angelic agency ; so new, that language is used by our Lord which at first sight implies that not till then had the interposition of angels really begun ; that only then the heavens would be opened, and the descent and ascent of angels begin. In using the term 'Son of Man' in connection with that promise—a term which always implies our Lord's human relation to His elect—He includes His elect of all times with Himself, as being thus destined to be more nearly related to the angel host, more specially objects of a fresh development of their care and love.

And certainly a very marked difference is to be discerned between the angelic ministrations of the older time and those of the new dispensation. During the older time the action of angels, as revealed to us, was on a large scale, affecting the concerns of nations and kingdoms, and of families only inasmuch as the elect race was confined to a family, the patriarchal line through which the Messiah was to come. But nothing is said in the Old Testament of the individuality of the angels' care ; of its extending to all the elect ; of a special relation of angels to individuals, because of their individual relation to God ; of such an extent of angelic ministrations as would bring them home to

¹ St. John i. 51

every man's private and personal consciousness, as his own special support and joy. There were indications, no doubt, partial illustrations, of such a law in the Old Testament, but they are rare and exceptional. To look at the Old Testament only, one would have said that angel guardianship, and angels' secret communion, was reserved as the privilege of great typical personages, as patriarchs or prophets, or of great collective hosts of the elect people, but not of an elect soul as such; nor if an angel were an occasional visitant in any case, that he could, so to speak, be depended on as a constant companion, a sure ministrant of Divine love and care at all times, 'in all our ways.'

This new and most eventful truth is one great distinguishing feature of the revelations of angel life in the New, as contrasted with those of the Old Testament. There for the first time we hear our Blessed Lord speaking of all His members, all His little ones, and saying that their angels do always behold the Face of 'His Father which is in heaven.'¹ The words assert this great truth of one equally as of another. His apostle unfolds yet further this great revelation when he says that the angels are 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation'²; language which equally includes all alike, all as 'heirs,' therefore without personal distinction. And the same Apostle

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 10. ² Heb. i. 14.

asserts the same universality of individual privilege, when, speaking alike to all to whom his epistles are addressed, he says : ' Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.'¹

The Church's traditional faith has been grounded on these pregnant passages. On these momentous words rests the belief of the guardian angels of baptized souls, of the daily care, the watchful protection, the ceaseless, countless ministries of love and power, which are around every child of God's eternal adoption. This faith has grown out of these precious words of Jesus and His Apostles. They involved, therefore, a very marked change as to the faith regarding angels ; for there was revealed not merely a greater intensity of interest and care, because of the great momentousness of the charge of souls in whom God dwells, for whom God suffered and died, for whom the unceasing Sacrifice and Intercession of the Lamb of God are being offered,—but the individuality of it, the like care extended to each, and its unceasingness from the font to the grave, through the grave to Paradise, and beyond Paradise to Heaven. The Fathers drew out this great truth always implying its intimate connection with the Incarnation of God. . . .

¹ Heb. xii. 22.

It is clear that this belief has ever been a very practical one; and indeed how can we for a moment suppose that such an array of heavenly beings, so powerful, so ardent, so intense in action and love, can be, as they are sometimes regarded, the mere decorative features of a poetic religion, the beautiful imagery of the rapt moods of the devout mind?

Nor is it less sure that their aid is of the most intimate and personal kind, although much mystery still hangs around the kind of communion which they are permitted to hold with us, and we have reverently to gather it by inference rather than by direct revelation. It would seem that as a tendency to the 'worshipping of angels'¹ developed itself even in the apostolic age, possibly on this account a reserve was kept as to the greatness of our obligations to these blessed guardians, lest in the instruments and agents of the Divine care we should lose the constant sense of the supreme Author both of their and our life. Even St. John needed a warning to preserve in his mind the clear assurance, that notwithstanding all their greatness and their power to aid, they are but 'fellow-servants.'² But if careful to take heed to such warnings, we may safely cherish for our stay and comfort, and in reverent regard to them for their kindness towards us, profound and earnest thoughts of

¹ Col. ii. 18.

² Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9.

their succour and defence, which, according to the Will of God, they never cease to supply to us in our need.

. . . With the certain knowledge revealed to us of the influence of evil angels, may we not conclude that no less power is being exercised by the unfallen angels, who still delight to use it as God gave, and designed it ; that the good angels not merely surround us to contend against the assaults of the evil 'principalities and powers,' who would destroy us ; not merely that they succour and defend us with their countless services of loving and watchful care to aid our weakness, or supply our need ; but that also, in union with God, they influence our inner life, suggest holy thoughts, captivate our imaginations, stir our wills, illumine our understandings, aid our efforts, direct our energies, and, holding secret communion of spirit with spirit, within our spirits, minister to us the gracious gifts of God ? How such subordinate ministries are combined with the working of the All-Holy Spirit Himself, we know not ; yet in acknowledging the instrumentality of the lower agency we are not excluding Himself, the Source of power. . . .

The invisible angels are to us in the spiritual world what the thousandfold ten thousand ministrations of visible creatures around us are in the natural world. We cannot indeed interchange sensible intercourse with the angels that aid and

defend us, but when their charge is fulfilled in bearing our souls to the Lord, we shall rejoice the more that we have believed the truth and love of God in ordaining for us their unseen agencies, even as we trusted to His innumerable visible agencies.

Our mission in the world is, together with the holy angels, and through their aid, to uphold the cause of God against the evil powers which oppose Him; to contend earnestly against whatever He has condemned; to be jealous of His honour; to be zealous of His commands. This was man's original call when he was placed, not as his first position, but by grace, in the Garden of Eden, with angels as his companions, 'to keep it' for God against the evil which then assailed it. Man failed, and fell. But the call and the power to fulfil the call was without repentance, and is revived again in Christ. In our blessed Lord, our true representative, in the wilderness of temptation, ministered to by angels, and assaulted by Satan, we see the renewed man, we see our present lot. Surrounded on all sides by what tempts the eye, deceives the heart, captivates the senses, bewilders the understanding, shakes the faith, the loyalty, the allegiance, the steadfastness of our frail nature, we are subjected to our course of trial. But angels are at our side, and God above, around, beneath, within us, to uphold, to fortify, to preserve us, if only with His words on

our lips, and His Will in our hearts, we stand firm.

Placed thus we are in this lower world, as having dominion over the creatures, and as representative of the God-Man, to keep ourselves pure; to be strong for the truth and love, the beauty and the glory of a higher world. While we have the confidence, as we trust to our Lord, that He will sustain us, as He sustained Himself, because we are His, we have the assurance also that we are not merely surrounded by visible objects, but that we dwell in the midst of an invisible world, a world of most energetic and glorious life, a world of spiritual beings, in comparison with whom we are 'made a little lower'¹ for awhile, that at last we may be raised above them, when all things shall be put under our feet, because Christ is so raised, and we are of Him, and in Him, nearest to His Throne, fellow-heirs of His Glory.

Thus girt about with angels, we are set to keep the charge of God. . . .

While we bear in our heart the consciousness of the Presence in which 'we live, and move, and have our being,' and of the heavenly hosts around us, shall we not be strong to resist temptation in deed, in word, or in thought?

We are on our probation; and the history of the angels is a warning, if the hour of our probation

¹ Heb. ii. 7.

pass, and we are faithless found among the faithful, unconverted to the Will of God, not having served Him acceptably according to His purpose.

T. T. Carter (1808-1901).

Fear not : for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man ; and he saw.—2 Kings vi. 16, 17.

WE cannot separate ourselves from the great human conviction that beside the supreme personal life of God, which is the source of all existence, there are other spiritual beings, of many varying orders, who do His Will, who help His children, and are the emanations of His life, in other worlds as man is here in this grosser world of flesh and blood. The Divine existence multiplies itself. The company of spiritual beings who surround Him with their loyalty and love, the angels in countless orders sweeping upward from the ministers of man's lower wants up to those who stand nearest to the Throne—all these in some belief or other have been included in the faith of every race of men, of almost every man, who had come to the knowledge of a spiritual world and trusted in a God. We must not rob ourselves of the strength and richness that the thought of their existence has to give.

What shall we say, for instance, of the beings whom the young man saw gathered in the mountain when his eyes were open? Were they flesh-and-blood warriors like the Syrian army camped

there in the plain below ? Were they mere ideas, visions that had no objective reality whatever, the mere pictures of a dream ? If we had not become such Sadducees in our disbelief of spiritual existence, we should not find it hard to believe that it was neither of these, but that with his newly-opened eyes he did indeed see beings of some higher spiritual order, who are always busy about this world of ours, only not visible to the dull senses of our ordinary life.

Certainly there is nothing clearer or more striking in the Bible than the calm, familiar way with which, from end to end it assumes the present existence of a world of spiritual beings, always close to and acting on this world of flesh and blood. It does not belong to any one part of the Bible. It runs throughout its whole vast range. From creation to judgment, the spiritual beings are for ever present. They act as truly in the drama as the men and women who, with their unmistakable humanity, walk the sacred stage in the successive scenes. There is nothing of hesitation about the Bible's treatment of the spiritual world. There is no reserve, no vagueness which would leave a chance for the whole system to be explained away into dreams and metaphors. The spiritual world, with all its multitudinous existence, is just as real as the crowded cities, and the fragrant fields, and the loud battlegrounds of the visible and palpable Judea in which the writers of the sacred books were living. You take away the unseen world, with all its unseen actors, from the story, and you have not

merely made the Bible like other books, you have set it below other books, for you have taken the colour out of all its life, the motive out of all its action.

But then the Bible goes farther. It not merely believes in and everywhere assumes the existence of spiritual beings ; it believes that to certain conditions even of our fleshly humanity these beings become visible. There is an opening of the eyes that lets us see what is going on in this finer, purer region round about us all the time. Is not this the idea of life that the Bible gives us, as if we were blind men walking in the midst of a great city, hearing its noise, feeling its jostling, and now and then in some peculiar moments of our life opening our eyes, catching one sudden flash of the movement that is going on around us, then shutting them again and taking the moment's sight back with us into the darkness, to ponder over, and too often, by and by, to come to doubt about whether we really saw ? So here and there an eye is opened. A man or a woman in the Bible is found in fit condition, and to that deeper sense it is recorded that spiritual beings made themselves visible, as if it were no stranger thing than for the opened eye of the flesh to see the sparkling splendour of the Temple and the Mount of Olives, and the high priest walking down the street, and all the familiar scenery of Jerusalem. The Hebrew maiden is about her pure and simple life in Nazareth, and she opens her eyes and sees the messenger, who hails her as the highly favoured of her Lord ; the shepherds are

watching in the fields, and suddenly they see the angels as truly and as clearly as they see the stars. The women go to the Sepulchre, and there sit the ministers beside the place where Jesus lay. Paul rides towards Damascus, and lo! he has fallen from his horse, and hears a voice which is intelligible to him alone. What shall we say? There is no doubt of what the Bible teaches, and it is what the human heart, taught by God through its own deepest instincts, has always guessed at and believed; that this world of fleshly life is not all, that everywhere there is a realm of spiritual life close to us, and that there is an inner sense to which, when it is wakened, these spiritual beings have often been actually visible, and given words of cheer, and guidance, and encouragement to toiling and discouraged men.

Can we believe anything like that? I am sure as we portray its possibility, we have some sense of more enlargement and richness in the universe, at least in our universe, in what concerns our life. The narrow walls of the moral life are rolled back, and there is more room to act, more space to breathe. The world of the Bible opens with its vast waves of motive coming in like the breath of the morning out of the regions of the unseen. The difference between the Bible, with its tides of spiritual life, and the modern novel, with its narrow studies of human character and action, as if they were the highest things in the universe; this difference describes the dignity of a belief in living spiritual influences, as contrasted with the low and

unenterprising Sadduceeism to which our souls incline. . . .

A true acceptance of the whole Bible idea of ever-present spiritual life would not set us to watching for the apparitions of the dead or for the sight of angels, but it would give us the strength which comes to every work and suffering from the knowledge that this universe is larger than it seems, and that it is all peopled with spiritual existences who are God's ministers to enlighten and to feed our life. The consciousness of many spiritual helpers must come, although they are not shown to us in any vision. Enough that men have looked and seen through some break in the cloud the comforting, defending spirits who are doing the Will of God in man's behalf. The brave man need not see any celestial form with spear and helmet by his side, yet he may know as he goes out to the battle that the spirits of justice everywhere are sympathizing with him and helping him in unknown ways. The mother may not discern an angel bending over the bed on which her child is laid, but still she may know there are other watchers by its bed beside herself, spirits whom God has sent to see that none of His little ones take any harm.

. . . We are not asking God to make a spiritual world for us, only to let us see it as it is. We do not pray God to love us, but we do pray that we may so see His love that we shall love Him back again, and be saved by loving. Let your highest needs plead with God to enlighten your lower nature, as Elisha pleaded for his servant. Pray

for yourself, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight!' ¹

For there are better things to see if you can only see them. And the reason that you do not see them now is not that God hides them, but that our eyes are blind. Let us cry after Christ the Revealer, as Bartimeus cried after Him at Jericho, and He will stop and speak to us, no matter who remonstrates. 'Receive thy sight, Thy faith hath saved thee,' He will say; and we shall begin to see the higher and the deeper things, and to take courage and be strong. We shall enter on that path of the just which is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Bishop Phillips Brooks (1835-1893).

LET us see in this history [of the young man in Dothan] a remedy against despondency, such as good Christians often feel in contemplating the state of the world at particular periods. All seems to be going against the cause of right, of truth, of God. 'The enemy crieth so, and the ungodly cometh on so fast, for they are minded to do me some mischief, so maliciously are they set against me.' ² The psalmist's cry is echoed by the Church, kneeling at the foot of the Throne of Christ, throughout the centuries: intellectual assailants, political adversaries, all the passions, all the prejudices, all the misapprehensions of unregenerate humanity, come down and besiege the prophet in Dothan. All might seem lost again and again, if the eyes of

¹ St. Luke xviii. 41-2.

² Ps. iv. 3.

the spirit could not be opened to perceive that they which are with us are more than they which are with them. Courage! The unseen is greater than the seen: the eternal will outlive the things of time. An act of faith may cross the threshold, and may at once correct the apparent preponderance of evil by a vision of the Throne and of the resources of the All-Good. . . .

There is an inspiration which comes from the sense of wide and noble fellowship, of high and distinguished associates and guardians, which is denied to those who have it not. And in His Kingdom God has provided us with this. All the races of the world furnish their contributions to the Universal Church: but the frontier of sense is not the frontier of the Church; it embraces both worlds—the unseen as well as the visible.¹ The Church is a world-embracing mixed society, consisting here of the faithful, there of the blessed angels and the spirits of the blessed dead; united in the bonds of indissoluble communion, and all ranged beneath the Throne of Thrones—the Throne of God, of Jesus.

Does this lofty conviction inspire no hatred of sin, no longing for a higher life, no wish to live as the companion of beings who constitute the Household of God, and are our predestined fellow-citizens? The Syrian host may press us hard,—the host of temptations, of bad thoughts, of bad acquaintances, of haunting memories:—but when, at the prayer of the Church, or our own, our eyes open upon the

¹ See Heb. xii. 24.

realities around and above us, we may remember that we have a great destiny before us, and means at hand to prepare for it. 'To have no sense of the invisible,' said a great writer, 'is the ruin of art.' To have no sense of the invisible, it may be most certainly added, is the ruin of virtue.

We may see here also the real secret of effective prayer and praise. . . . Prayer is so cold and heartless a form because men have no true sight of God, of Jesus, of His Majesty, His Beauty, His Glory, such as is possible to our finite and purblind gaze;—of the everlasting worship which surrounds Him, of the courtiers around His Throne, those ministers of His that do His pleasure. . . .

There are few better prayers on entering a church than Elisha's, 'Lord, open mine eyes that I may see.' I do not wish to mock Thee by lip-service; I do not wish to pile my ordinary business thoughts, or thoughts of pleasure, on the very steps of Thy Throne. Open mine eyes that I may see Thee in Thy Beauty, and in Thy glorious Presence may lose my relish for all that only belongs to time. It is when the soul struggles thus with God in spiritual agony, that it is emancipated from the tyranny of sense, and, like the dying Stephen, really sees the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.¹

H. P. Liddon (1829–1890).

¹ 1 Acts vii. 55–6.

CHAPTER III

The Holy Angels in Relation to God and Man

The Eternal Love
In His Eternity ere time began
Beyond all comprehension took delight
New combinations of His love to plan.

DANTE.



AN ANGEL ADORING.

(Filippo Lippi.)

The Holy Angels in relation to God and Man

THERE is a remarkable likeness between the work of the angels and the Christian ministry. The familiar words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?'¹ contain a wealth of suggestions in this direction. It only requires a slightly imaginative development to paraphrase thus: 'Are they not all spirits of priestly work sent forth, as apostles are sent, to do the work which begins with the office of deacon?' In the work of the ministering priest, the deacon, and the apostolic pastor, all Christians share, and thus the whole of our service has that of the angels for its pattern. Dwelling on this thought we find that this service of angels and men is threefold—first, in relation to God; secondly, in relation to man; thirdly, in relation to the God-Man. The creation of the 'bodiless ones,' as the Eastern Church loves to call them, is too often forgotten. If it were better remembered, the presence of death and decay in the pre-Adamite universe would seem less strange.

¹ Heb. i. 14.

For those, indeed, to whom the unseen is always the unreal, the existence of angels only seems possible in imaginative literature. But for Christians, to whom our incarnate Lord has opened the way into the unseen world, the personal existence of unfallen as well as fallen spirits must be certain ; and if God alone is uncreated, the spirits, no less than men, must be among His creatures : and if God is good it must have been by a fall, the result of a refusal to love, and not by an original act of the divine Creator, that any spirits have lost holiness. Hence Faber's beautiful words¹ do not overpass the just limits of devout imagination.

‘ In pulses deep of threefold Love,
 Self-hushed and self-possessed,
 The mighty, unbeginning God
 Had lived in silent rest.

· · · · ·
 He stirred—and yet we know not how,
 Nor wherefore He should move ;
 In our poor human words, it was
 An overflow of love.

· It was the first outspoken word
 That broke that peace sublime,
 An outflow of eternal love
 Into the lap of time.

¹ Hymns, ed. 1861, p. 189.

He stirred ; and beauty all at once
 Forth from His Being broke ;
 Spirit and strength, and living life,
 Created things, awoke.

Order and multitude and light
 In beauteous showers outstreamed ;
 And realms of newly fashioned space
 With radiant angels beamed.

How wonderful is life in Heaven
 Amid the angelic choirs,
 Where uncreated Love has crowned
 His first created fires !'

It is to be noted that before they were angels, that is messengers, they were sons of God. It would appear that at their first creation there were no other creatures to whom they could be messengers. The creation of their finite intelligences places before our minds the first thought of the succession of time, for there is no time with the infinite God. They are the ' sons of God ' who, when He laid the foundations of the earth, ' shouted for joy ' ; perhaps indeed they are also the morning-stars which sang together.¹ We think of them then in the first moments of their being as pure spirits, the only created beings alone with God. Their employment and, as it seems, their probation, was the energy of filial love. But since the Eternal Son is the

¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

first-born of every creature, that is, the uncreated pattern of all the children of God, we may go further, and say that their filial energy was founded on the imitation of His eternal return into the bosom of the Father. We therefore conceive them, in the first moment of their existence, alone with God, offering to Him that praise of adoring love which is due from all creatures to the Creator. The sight of God which in the New Testament is the reward of the pure in heart and the cause of perfection, belonged already to these blessed spirits; but certain indications in St. Paul and St. Peter give us the right to assume—what even without them we might have conjectured—that this state of blessedness was not so complete as to leave nothing to be sought or desired. It is one of the results of ‘the mystery of godliness,’¹ that the Eternal Son was seen of angels. The principalities and powers receive their knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God through the Church.² The angels desire to look into the mysteries of the gospel which is preached to Christians.³ The relation of finite creatures to the infinite must always be incomplete, and capable of increase, and this increase appears to have been the only conceivable addition to the blessedness of the angels at the beginning of their existence. If we return to the thought, that their life is the pattern of earthly ministries, we are in

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² Eph. iii. 10.

³ 1 Pet. i. 12.

a position to see that the human ministers of God must be His sons before they can be His messengers, and that all ministerial activity must be based upon previous sonship and upon the privilege of being alone with God. This lesson is supported by St. Paul's three years in Arabia after his conversion, by the sojourn of the youthful John in the wilderness of Judea, and above all by the thirty years of retirement which preceded the three years of our Lord's own ministry. Those who desire to work for God must first know Him. 'Who art thou, Lord?' comes first, and then 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'¹ We may note further that it is the spirit of man, that is, his will and affections, which is chiefly concerned with this primary relation to God. Prayer, meditation, adoration, sacrifice, communion—these are the acts which, for the true Christian, and still more for the faithful priest, lie at the root of a life of service.

The second sphere in which we can see the spiritual hosts of God begins with the creation of man. Like the heavenly intelligences, and unlike the material universe, man is created to serve God, not under the law of force, but under the law of love. He is seen by them entering a world which has been under their care, and which bears the marks not only of their faithfulness, but also of the sin which has made empty some of their thrones.

¹ Acts ix. 5 ; xxii. 10.

There seems reason to place the fall of the rebel angels after the creation of the Universe, and certainly before the creation of man. What we know of the nature of their sin comes, almost entirely, from what we are able to say about the necessary relation of creatures to the Creator. All creatures are made to serve God, and all rational creatures to serve Him out of love. We can conceive nothing but refusal of love which could be the cause of the fall of the Angels, and that refusal is a cause sufficient. It is indeed impossible not to recognise in the record of the sin of the King of Babylon,¹ and that of the King of Tyre,² imagery which seems to adapt itself to the fall of the Angels. ‘How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning . . . thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ; . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit.’ Thus of the King of Babylon. And in the same way Ezekiel speaks of the King of Tyre. ‘Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God : every precious stone was thy covering . . . the workmanship of thy tabrets and thy pipes was in thee ; in the day when

¹ Isaiah xiv.

² Ezek. xxviii. 12.

thou wast created they were prepared. Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth : and I see thee so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God : thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created until unrighteousness was found in thee. By the multitude of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned : therefore have I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God, and I have destroyed thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty : thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness : I have cast thee to the ground, I have laid thee before kings, that they may behold thee.'

Cardinal Newman ¹ has made the angels themselves describe their probation :

'The Angels, as beseemingly
 To spirit-kind was given,
 At once were tried and perfected,
 And took their seats in heaven.

For them no twilight or eclipse ;
 No growth and no decay :
 'Twas hopeless, all-ingulfing night,
 Or beatific day.

¹ *Dream of Gerontius.*

But to the younger race there rose
A hope upon its fall ;
And slowly, surely, gracefully,
The morning dawned on all.'

Thus the relation of the Angels to God is found, after their probation, to consist of secure adherence or irrevocable separation.

The second stage of their history begins with the creation of man. For him, also, there was a probation, and we can imagine that the fall of our first parents must have been expected by the angels to involve the same final ruin as that of their own companions. It is hardly possible to doubt that but for the boundless charity with which they were endowed, they must have felt something like jealousy at the hope permitted to the younger race. Certainly there was no jealousy in their conduct. Faithful to the purpose of God, the unfallen angels took at once under their protection fallen man. Through the Old Testament we can trace the times on which this ministry was developed. It was especially a ministry to individuals—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, the parents of Samson, David, Daniel—to all these the Lord Jehovah was revealed by the acts and words of the Angel who so closely represented Him as to be thought of by some Christian Fathers as if he were himself the Person of the Eternal Son. This opinion must not, indeed, be condemned as certainly false, though we may

prefer to follow Dr. Pusey's thought, who says¹ :
 ' It seems to me most probable that he was a created Angel . . . of this Angel God says " My name is in him."'² In him were manifested the Divine Attributes : he was the minister of God's justice, who would not pardon their transgressions ; to him God required obedience to be paid. His speaking was God speaking in him ; for God says, " If thou shalt indeed obey his voice and do all that I command you ! " Since God was present in him, God uses as equivalent terms the words " the angel of his presence "³ or " My presence,"⁴ the same angel, I think, was meant by Elihu, the " angel interpreter."⁵ It is most probable that Michael is no other than that Angel of the Lord by whom God manifested Himself of old, for the Angel of the Lord seems to be the same who declared himself to be the prince of the host of the Lord⁶—a title given in Daniel to ' Michael, your prince ' ; ' one of the great princes ' ; ' the great prince which standeth up for the children of thy people.'⁷ The great work of the angels and especially of their great leader, was to prepare the way for the coming of our Lord. Like St. John the Baptist, they made men feel the need of One whom as yet they knew not. A perfect picture of this side of their work is found in the vision of Jacob,

¹ *Daniel the Prophet*, p. 516. ² Ex. xxiii. 21. ³ Is. lxiii. 9.

⁴ Ex. xxxiii. 14.

⁵ Job xxxiii. 23. ⁶ Josh. v. 14.

⁷ Dan. x. 13-21 ; xii. 1.

where the angels who in other ministrations enjoy the freedom of flight, stand in need of mysterious assistance when their work is to connect the penitent patriarch with the Lord Himself. The words of our Lord at the calling of Nathanael¹ imply that the ladder of Jacob was a symbol of Himself. The ministration of the angels to the chosen people comes to its highest point when St. Gabriel, after predicting the birth of the Baptist, is charged with the great announcement to the chosen mother of God. A beautiful hallowing of the Christian teacher's office is to be found in the archangel's words to Mary. They exactly express the message of the Church to the baptized child, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee,' and to the same child as a candidate for confirmation, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.'

Our third stage in contemplation of the Holy angels finds them receiving the blessing for which they have always longed in heaven through perseverance in their earthly ministry. We have already assured ourselves that in the presence of God they longed for a fuller knowledge of Him. The finite capacities of the angels, however much greater they may be than our own, do not exempt them from the limitation of which we are so deeply conscious. They, like us, are unable with finite capacities to comprehend the infinite being of God,

¹ St. John i. 51.

and thus in one of its great aspects the Incarnation of the Word conferred upon the angels the same benefit as upon man. In Mary's divine Child they were able to learn more than they had ever known of the nature of God. We have learnt from SS. Peter and Paul that the angels are still learning from the Gospel and the Church. This is a continuation of what must have begun when they saw the features, heard the words, and adored the wisdom of the acts of Jesus. Although He increased in wisdom as well as in stature, His actions from the first possessed each in its place and kind the fulness of divine perfection. Along with this high privilege came the demand for a second manifestation of self-surrendering love on the part of the Holy Angels. As they had triumphed over jealousy when they accepted the care of fallen man, so they set us an example of detachment when they resign the place which had become habitual to them as the representatives of God to His elect. It is true that they still minister. Indeed, their ministry comes to a fulness in the Christian dispensation which it never had before, but it is discharged by them as the attendants and servants of the Incarnate Son. As the viceroy falls into a subordinate place on the arrival of the Emperor, so the angels, with St. John the forerunner, yield with joy their representative functions when the Father brings into the world the First-begotten. If we would under-

stand rightly the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we must remember that the patronage of the angels had come to be specially valued by the Alexandrian Jews, and the first object of the inspired writer is to lift the devotion of the Jewish Christians from the angels to their Lord.

As they have set us the example of beginning with God, so we learn from them to end in Him. Our faith and our meditations are the preparation for our work for our fellow creatures: it is in that work that we come to know God more fully in Jesus Christ, and this increase of knowledge leads to a fulness of self-surrender in which even the joys of work for others are swallowed up in the unspeakable possession of the Incarnate Son.

V. S. S. C.

GOD is at the head of the immense hierarchy of all beings in the creation, and they all, whether material or spiritual, originate in Him, like an abundant source which flows from the summit of a mountain, and is divided into streams. The nearest to Him are the angels, and therefore participate more than all other creatures of His perfection, and resemble Him the most.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274).

WE are content to say with St. Augustine, *Esse firmissime credo, quaenam sint nescio* : That there are distinct orders of angels, assuredly I believe ; but what they are, I cannot tell ; *Dicant qui possunt ; si tamen probare possunt quod dicunt*, says that Father : Let them tell you that can, so that they be able to prove that they tell you true.

They are creatures, that have not so much of a body as flesh is, as froth is, as a vapour is, as a sigh is, yet with a touch they shall moulder a rock into less atoms, than the sand that it stands upon ; and a millstone into smaller flour, than it grinds. They are creatures made, and yet not a minute elder now than when they were first made, if they were made before all measure of time began ; nor if they were made in the beginning of time, have they one wrinkle of age in their face, or one sob of weariness in their lungs. They are *primogeniti Dei*, God's eldest sons ; they are super-elementary meteors, they hang between the nature of God, and the nature of man, and are of middle condition ; and (if we may offencelessly express it so) they are *aenigmata Divina*, the riddles of Heaven, and the perplexities of speculation. But this is but till the resurrection ; then we shall be like them, and know them by that assimilation.

John Donne (1573-1631).

THE exact nature and being of the Holy Angels we do not learn ; but it is apparent from Scripture that they hold, in analogy with their office, a nature midway between man and God. They were created

beings like man ; for we read in the second chapter of Genesis, ‘ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.’

They were created with spiritual and ethereal bodies ; with wisdom, and holiness, and purity, and great power, and swiftness of motion, so as to be like God ; but yet capable of falling, and incurring God’s wrath (as some did) like man.

Their knowledge, too, was very great, but yet it was definite and prescribed, as is the knowledge of man.

All this shows the peculiarity of their nature, as taking a place in God’s works above that of man ; and yet, in one sense, man is above them, for the Son of Man, Jesus Christ our Lord, as Man, sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High ; ‘ He was made better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.’¹ . . .

What a multitude of thoughts this faith raises up in our minds ! The unseen world ! The world of spirits ! That the air about us, the fields, the streets, our rooms, are peopled with a heavenly host, which we can neither touch nor see ! And yet it is only in accordance with the analogy of nature ; for nature begins her work of God from the lowest, ascending in scales and degrees to the highest : from stones and minerals, mere matter which has no life, to vegetables which have an organic life—from vegetables to the half organic, half sentient life of the creatures of the sea—from

¹ Heb. i. 4.

that lowest kind of sentient life to full animal power—and from that, again, in a scale working upward to life, with degrees of instinct and seeming rational power, until we come to the life of man. But having come so far as man from the lowest, it seems but analogous to continue to something higher. So it is said when David speaks of man, that God made him ‘a little lower than the angels’; whereas St. Paul speaks of our Lord ‘being made so much better than the angels’; in which we see the scale continued, man in himself and of his own nature in the scale above the brute creation, but below angels; then the angels next, but angels again lower in the scale when we come to Christ, Who joined the Divine nature to the human, and so brought it up above the angels in His Own Person. The angelic host stand, then, in their rank of the creation according to analogy. Thus, then, it is. There is a part of the creation, and that by far the most wonderful part, the most numerous part, the most beautiful part, as yet utterly unseen by us; we know nothing by fact of angelic ministrations, that they minister for us, or succour us, or defend us—we never see them—we never feel that they do so—we are never sensible of it by any proof of things done in consequence of it, and yet we believe it. And where can they be? Impalpable, invisible, presenting a nature to God which His universal Power creates, and a nature to themselves which they are permitted of God to recognise in each other, but to us nothing—filling up one more great order of this universe,

so vast, so magnificent, but to us as yet unknown. What an inducement this is, merely this single idea of our being in an ascending scale of creation, as yet imperfect, to give us care in the prospect of the future, so that we attain that which is perfect ; what an inducement to know that there are principalities and powers, and dominions of heavenly beings, whose glory we have not the least notion of, waiting to receive us in the many mansions promised by Christ ; and thence being made known to us, by the imparting of new senses to our present imperfect natures, to carry us on into the presence of our God. . . .

This faith in the Holy Angels is an argument for great reverence, and hearty zeal in the performance of the various duties of Divine worship. We are too much in the habit of estimating the value of the Divine offices of the Church by the number of a congregation. It is a pleasing sight to behold, in the Houses of our God, vast multitudes gathered together for His praise ; but the fact of a very few being collected together ought not to damp our spirits, or cast a gloom about us, still less ought it to be made a criterion of the value of the service performed to God, for this reason—first, that our Lord Himself has promised, that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them ; and secondly, because we are assured that the Holy Angels are always present to thicken the numbers, and fill up the places which negligent and careless men leave vacant. If the few that do meet are

but holy and sincere, those few are made countless multitudes in reality, by the presence of 'God's Hosts.' And so let not your prayers or your praises lose their energy because you see not many with you. Remember that angels are adding to your worship, that angels join you in your praise, and that angels are ever ready to carry both your prayers and your praises as tokens of your faith before the Throne of God, and Jesus Christ His Son.

W. J. E. Bennett (1804-1886).

O passing Angel, speed me with a song,
 A melody of Heaven to reach my heart
 And rouse me to the race and make me strong ;
 Till in such music I take up my part,
 Swelling those Hallelujahs full of rest,
 One tenfold, hundredfold, with heavenly art,
 Fulfilling north and south, and east and west,
 Thousand, ten thousand fold, innumerable,
 All blent in one, yet each one manifest ;
 Each one distinguished and beloved as well
 As if no second voice in earth or heaven
 Were lifted up the Love of God to tell.

Christina Rossetti.

CHAPTER IV

The Holy Angels in regard to their Corporate State and Life

These various ranks all fix their looks above,
And shower such influence down below, that they
All draw towards God, as they are drawn by love.

DANTE.

The Angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God.

E. B. BROWNING.



TOBIAS AND THE THREE ARCHANGELS.

(Botticelli.)

AN infinite increase of Angels bright,
All glistening glorious in their Maker's light.

To them the heaven's illimitable height
(Not this round heaven, which we from hence behold,
Adorn'd with thousand lamps of burning light,
And with ten thousand gems of shining gold,)
He gave as their inheritance to hold,
That they might serve Him in eternal bliss,
And be partakers of those joys of His.

There they in their trinal triplicities
About Him wait, and on His will depend,
Either with nimble wings to cut the skies,
When He them on His messages doth send,
Or on His own dread Presence to attend,
Where they behold the glory of His light,
And carol hymns of love both day and night.

Edmund Spenser.

The Holy Angels in regard to their Corporate State and Life

To pious souls there are few studies more fascinating or more elevating than that of the holy angels. These bright, celestial beings appear before us mortals (who as yet are perhaps in the lowest scale of rational creatures) as messengers from the Most High, to whom they render so perfect a service that, when they come to us, they rarely utter anything but that which they are commanded to declare to us. It would seem to be only when the occasion makes it a necessity that we hear them giving expression to any spontaneous utterance of their own. In consequence of this, their personality has been overshadowed by their function and ministry, and the disposition of the Church of the Old Testament has been rather to mark what the angel does than what the angel is. Indeed, the very name 'angel' ('messenger') speaks, not of himself, but of his office.

But though they come to us in so exalted a way, and thus lay upon us the great primary duty of receiving in humble adoration, not themselves, but

that which they come to bring, still, at the same time, we cannot help longing to know something of what they are, their own being and life, their relationship to God, to each other, and to mankind. Such a longing is simply natural ; and we know that He Who is the Creator of whatever desires are ' simply natural ' has His own provision, in His due and perfect order, for gratifying them. He does so in this case. In the prayer which He has bequeathed to His Church, He teaches us to offer the distinct petition ' Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.'¹ ' As in heaven ' ; that is to say, the *coelum angeliferum* ; there where the holy angels dwell, and live their life and do their work in God. We are, then, nothing less than divinely commanded to satisfy our longings to know about these heavenly beings, and we are commanded to do so by studying the way in which they fulfil the Creator's will, and by learning from this study how we should fulfil it ourselves.

It is in obedience to this command we proceed to our study here ; and may He Who thus gives both the command and the object for our obeying it, grant us His merciful grace and guidance, in our thoughts and in the applications we should make from them.

And let us not suppose that we are departing from the immediate study before us, that of the

¹ St. Matt. vi. 10, R.V.

holy angels themselves, in making these applications to current circumstances of our time ; for no truth can be really known until we have closed with it in our actual experiences. The very contrast, too, which sometimes glaringly appears by the placing side by side of things as they ideally are with the angels in heaven, and things as they really are with us on earth, is perhaps the best way in which we can learn, not only what is our own state, but—which is the object of our study—what is really theirs. Moreover, what else could a faithful study of things above, for the purpose of becoming more like them here below, do but this—namely, make us feel their bearing upon what, at any given time, is most prominent with ourselves. To turn aside and to avoid such a bearing would be to make our study a study with digressions. And if this contact should sometimes sting us with the truth it forces us to face, let us not hold back. Flashes of sunlight may make us sometimes wince ; but without them we should die. And, lastly, let us remember that it is only for such a purpose as this, the working it out into the things of this life, that our Blessed Lord gives us the command for making our study of the holy angels at all.

And what, then, first of all, does our Blessed Lord's injunction teach us ? It first of all shows that there is a close relationship between the holy angels and ourselves. Although they are 'in

heaven' and we are 'on earth,' yet it is the same 'Will' we both are to serve. And further, this relationship is also a great and personal fellowship. For not only are we to learn of the Divine Will from them; but they are to learn of it, on their part, from us. 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places,' exclaims our Lord's Apostle, 'might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.'¹ And this fellowship is a 'corporate' fellowship. It is, we see, the *Angelic Society* which is to learn of us, just as it is the *Christian Society*, or Church, addressing her prayer to God as '*Our Father*,' which is to learn of them.

Here, perhaps, it is not out of place to remark, and the history of the Church has not made it unnecessary, that there is no idea of 'worship' in this corporate fellowship. If there was, then, since in another pregnant passage the Apostle actually tells us that good angels themselves are one day coming within the judicial activity of glorified believers,² there would seem to be less error in the angels worshipping the Church than in the Church worshipping angels. But we never find them doing this. On the contrary, as we have pointed out, they simply appear before us to do

¹ Eph. iii. 10, 11, R.V.

² 1 Cor. vi. 3a.

God's will concerning us and nothing further. Nor do they ever for a moment accept from us any idea of our worshipping them. The holy angel who attended upon St. John in the courts of heaven instantaneously checked an attempt to do this on the part of the Apostle, reminding him that their relationship was one of 'fellow-service.'¹ Theodoret and St. Augustine, with the chiefest of the Fathers, have both opposed angel-worship; while the Council of Laodicea forbade Christians to leave their Church in order to attend private meeting-places in which angels were invoked, and anathematises those who are guilty of this idolatry; thus re-echoing the prohibition of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians.² Corporate fellowship, not worship, is the bond of our mutual relationship.

What then is the nature of the angelic corporate life with which the Church, in her own corporate life, has this fellowship? We can afford to miss out no point, and therefore we must begin by noting, what is a self-evident truth—namely, that it is *spiritual* corporate life, inasmuch as, in their very essence they who form it are all of them ministering 'spirits' in the holiest meaning of the word.³

We pause, before we go further, to apply this fundamental truth. Yes; and when shall we, in our branch (in any case) of the Church, have truly learned that the first great aim, if we are to do

¹ Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9.

² ii. 18.

³ Heb. i. 14.

God's will on earth as it is done in heaven, must be to do it *spiritually*? Do we not still need more earnestness in making this absolutely the first requirement for admission into the ministering orders of the Church? Is not much of the success of Nonconformity in its own sphere, and much of its aversion towards us in ours, due to the simple truth that many Nonconformists too often know from spiritual experiences which are theirs, the absence of the same in us? Do not the dealings of God appear to show that, if in any given place it is to be a question of spirituality outside the Church's *régime* or of the Church's *régime* outside spirituality, we might almost say of the flock outside the fold or of the fold outside the flock, it is with the former that God sides? Is not the existence of much Nonconformity due to our non-recognition of 'spiritual gifts,' and to the forgetting that these 'charismata' are granted directly and apart from the 'diakonai,' or 'ministries'? Does not this non-recognition on our part too often almost compel the exercising of the 'gifts' to be apart from union with the 'ministries,' and so frustrate God's Will being done in the way in which He desires it to be done? Are not appointments to parochial benefices, to the over-charge of God's Church which is called into existence by His Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of His Divine purpose in the world, still too often made in obvious

regard to the possession by the one appointed of material means for the maintaining a certain standard of a so-called 'position' (our modern simony), instead of in regard, first and foremost, to his spirituality? Surely if we had more faith in spirituality we should find that devotion called forth devotion, and, in consequence, that requisite supplies would not be wanting. Goethe once said, 'If you would do something, you must first of all be something.' And if the Church on earth, as her Lord commands, is to do as the angels do, she must start with being what the angels are—spiritual.

The next self-evident truth in regard to the angelic corporate life is that it is *social*. We find this all through Holy Scripture. At their first appearance on the scene of the newly formed world, and again at the new era at the birth of our blessed Lord, it is in the social aspect of a 'chorus' that they are there brought to view, 'when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' The title, also, which is here given them declares the same truth; for if God, as in the Christian faith we know, is a God Who is a Divine society, His 'sons' must be the same. Over two hundred and eighty times in Holy Scripture is God called the God, or Lord, of 'hosts.' These hosts of angelic beings are described as sabaoth, mahanaim, armies, camps.

‘ They for us fight, they watch and duly ward
And their bright squadrons round about us plant.’¹

But ‘ hosts,’ ‘ armies,’ ‘ camps,’ ‘ squadrons,’ under the control of one Almighty mind, imply a life which is not that of a mob, not that of a multitude of isolated individuals, but that of an organised society. The Apostolic description, too, which we have already quoted, of their being all of them ‘ ministering ’ (‘ leitourgika,’ we might almost say ‘ liturgical ’) ‘ spirits,’² seems also perhaps to suggest their fellowship in the combined movement of some vast and ordered act of temple-worship, which is social.

‘ lowly reverent,
Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground
With solemn adoration down they cast
Their crowns inwove with amarant and gold.’³

It is evident, then, that if we are to serve God on earth after the example of the angels in heaven, it is as an organised society that we must do so. Heaven knows nothing of undenominationalism. Undenominationalism, as its very term signifies, is a something which is disconnected from fellowship with any society. But that is what the spiritual life and worship of the angels above is not, and certainly it is exactly what Christianity is not. As we look into the mirror of Holy Scripture and

¹ *Faery Queene*, II. viii. 2.

² Heb. i. 14.

³ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, iii. 349.

see there these sons of God, these choirs ; these hosts and armies of the living Lord ; these attendants in the courts of heaven upon vast acts of holiest worship ; mutiny dignified with the name of private enterprise, or separated action honoured as laudable zeal is, as existing there, simply unthinkable. And is not this a vision which we Christians, in our still divided state, need now to be keeping before our eyes ? In the early days of Christianity we were nearer to the Holy Angels, than we are now, in doing nothing contrary to the social life of the Church. Then, none ever thought of any other way of entering into the Christian life at all except as by being ‘ added to the Church.’¹ Then, those who were so added ‘ continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.’² Then, even an Apostle, and one ‘ not a whit behind the very chiefest,’³ would submit his preaching to the society of the Church for its endorsement, that it might then have due acceptance with those to whom it had been addressed⁴ ; while that same Apostle, in writing to his successor in Crete concerning the duties of his calling, described his own apostleship as being ‘ according to the faith of God’s elect.’⁵ We need to recover this likeness to the holy angels, and to remind ourselves of the very title-page of our Book of Common

¹ Acts ii. 47.

² Acts ii. 42, R.V.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 5.

⁴ Gal. ii. 2.

⁵ Titus i. 1.

Prayer, stating that it contains the administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church (Catholic), according to the use of the Church of England, and so serve God acceptably in fellowship with that branch of the Church which is in our own land, as that branch of the Church which is in our own land serves God acceptably in fellowship with all that is of the truth in the Church which is everywhere. Do I claim that I have 'charismata,' spiritual 'gifts,' and with the simple fact of possessing them the inherent authority for exercising them? Let me exercise them as the holy angels ever exercise the charismata which are theirs, not breaking from the society which is the divinely appointed sphere for their development. Do I feel in the particular place where I am that the officers of the Church commit the sin of not recognising, perhaps awfully even discouraging, these 'gifts,' and so God's Will for their exercise? Let me, then, at least not add sin to sin by refusing, on my part, to recognise the Church's possession and exercising of 'ministries'; nor, because I shrink from the cross of the lack of deserved sympathy, or even the cross of cold discouragement, make the sacrilegious endeavour to start another Church, which is no Church, with other ministries, which are no ministries. For if there is one thing certain it is this: I cannot do God's Will on earth as it is

done in heaven, if I am attempting to do so in violation of social order.

But—and this becomes our next point of inquiry—what are the component parts of which the Angelic Society is made up? As the Church, with that spiritual faculty for beholding the things of heaven with which she is divinely endowed, has fixed her gaze on the life and doings of these choirs and hosts above, reflected in the pages of Holy Scripture, there have unfolded before her eyes the dividing outlines of nine orders, each order being marked out by some special ethical distinction, bearing some grace, or function, or character, peculiar to itself, by which it glorifies some special attribute of the Deity. Gazing further, these manifold orders have been seen by the Church to group themselves into three triads of choirs, or hierarchies, each of these again dividing themselves into three ranks or orders.

. . . ‘ Angels, by imperial summons called,
Innumerable before th’ Almighty’s throne,
Forthwith from all the ends of heaven appear’d
Under their hierarchs in orders bright.’¹

The first and highest of these hierarchies, or choirs, is composed of the angels of the Contemplative orders, the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones. Next to these comes the hierarchy, or

¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, v. 587.

choir, of the Regulative orders, the Dominions (or, Dominations), the Virtues, and the Powers. And then follows the hierarchy or choir of the Administrative orders, the Principalities (or Princedoms), the Archangels, and the Angels.

‘Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues,
Powers,’

‘The mighty regencies of Seraphim,
And Potentates,’ ‘in their triple degrees.’¹

So perfect in its several component parts is this Society, that we have nothing like it on earth. The Church will only perhaps attain to the possession of a likeness to it when she herself arrives at that city above where, like these threefold hierarchies of the angels with their equal number of ranks, we are told ‘the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal’² in the faultless form of its proportions. We cannot hope, therefore, in our present condition, so far from so perfect a model, to apply these orders in detail to any corresponding counterpart in the Church. No such counterpart exists. There are no defined spheres in our Church organisation here on earth, in which we might try and manifest, each in its own place and in right relationship to all the rest, those several graces which we behold in the glorious vision of those triple hierarchies above, each with its triad of ranks,

¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, v. 601 &c.

² Rev. xxi. 16.

each rank ablaze with its own clear-shining and exemplified form of spiritual life and light. All that we can endeavour to do now is to learn from that vision some broad unmistakable truths, and to seek then to realise them here as best and where we can.

One great truth, then, as we begin to lift our eyes, we surely can in outline discern—namely, the great truth and principle of distinguishing between vocations. The society there is one; the chorus there is one; the family there is one; one great army under one great Head, permeated and dominated throughout by one Divine and single Will, to bow to which is the one common joy of all, by which all (to use Milton's beautiful expression) are ever 'evenly' ruled,¹ comprises every host and band; one great act of worship is the one source of the quickening of that spiritual life which throbs through every angel of all that one holy company; and yet there are no two ranks throughout that manifold array which are endowed with the same gifts or identified with the same occupation. Everywhere we behold different spirits living in different vocations. No two among them reveal in the same way the inexhaustible wisdom of God.

'Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced,
Standards and gonfalons 'twixt van and rear
Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees.'²

¹ *Samson Agonistes*, 671.

² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, v. 588.

Turning to earth, the Church of England, it was once said, had two great things to learn, 'conversion and vocation,'—that is to say, their principles, as requiring to be both spiritually and scientifically understood. It is still, perhaps, the Church of England's lack of knowledge of the former which leaves to various Nonconformist agencies much of their spiritual force; and it is still, perhaps, the Church of England's lack of knowledge of the latter which leaves to the Church of Rome much of her present power. But the lack of knowledge of the former is due, really, in large measure, to lack of knowledge of the latter. Despite the increase, thank God, of 'missions' (though often brought about by light thrown upon the Church from without rather than from light emanating spontaneously from the Church within), the great crying need of the Church to-day is still the crying need for real evangelists. The man who can give addresses is too often even yet considered, merely because of this, to be the same as the man who so gives his addresses as then and thereby to bring about conversions. There appears to be no serious general attempt at present to discern, and so to train and develop, such an all-important vocation as that of an evangelist. And the need of this sense of appreciating 'vocation' is seen in other ways. Our parochial system, as it is at present, is an example of it. It would be simply unimaginable

that, in heaven, an angel could be allotted a certain portion of its realms from which, if he was so minded, he could exclude his companions (were such a thing possible with an angel), while all the time his own spiritual capacities were contracting within a prescribed zone of isolation ; and while he was discarding increasing needs there for spiritual energies in shutting his eyes to his incapacity for forwarding any further the Divine interests in that particular locality wherein he was situated. Although, indeed, with the rising tide and higher level of spiritual public opinion which, thank God, has been coming over us (a tide, however, which can also have its ebb), what we have described is becoming happily less an actual fact, it still nevertheless remains that that single act of the appointment to a cure of souls, in the *régime* of the Church of England, can be the act of condemning a precious flock of the blood-bought sheep of Christ to the forfeiture of all other blessings of all other vocations except that of the particular individual appointed over it,—granting that he had a vocation. Wesley himself declared that he had not found the man in whom were all the qualifications requisite for the complete bringing about of the conversion of a single individual soul. We may yet learn from Wesley, and bear in mind that, as we look up to the holy angelic hills, in conformity to whose outline God would shape the rising structure of his Church

on earth, no boundary of their perfect ranges appears graced with but a solitary peak.

The next great outlined truth which strikes our vision, as we gaze on this nine-fold order, is contained in the three great groupings into which their ranks are gathered : the Contemplative, the Regulative, and the Administrative. This order of grouping shows that just as in administrations there are no true or effective activities but those which spring from great underlying, regulating principles, so, in the same way, are there no great underlying principles of regulation which, in their turn, are not born of the highest and holiest contemplation. It is the contemplative orders which in heaven are those nearest to God, Who is the fount of all outflowing gradations of life. We do not forget our Tenth Book of Aristotle, telling us that pleasure is not a motion but a vision, and that man's highest happiness is in contemplation, wherein he approaches that life which is nearest to the Divine. That ancient philosopher, though writing before the Christian era had dawned upon the earth, was surely 'not far from the kingdom of God.' Are we, in this matter, as near? Reverence for simple truth demands that we acknowledge that both the Roman and the Greek Communions are closer to it than ourselves. They still bestow their highest esteem on those who embrace the 'religious life,' that specified recognition of spiritual con-

templation as the chiefest function of the inner activities of the Church—a life which, as even Aristotle can teach us, we should consider apart from, and if need be, safeguard and deliver from, abuses or degradations into which those professing it may have fallen, and which so far only show us, not what it really *is*, but what it really is *not*. In England we quickly appreciate what is ‘practical,’ that is to say, anything within the hierarchies of administration ; and more or less, too, the study of regulative principles and laws by which administration can be made most effective ; but where religion cannot be seen in some actual working for our betterment in making life more acceptable around us, our English mind is not so ready to follow. We have in a large sense lost that spiritual faculty for tracing the seen into that which is not seen, and for perceiving that after all it is from *there* that what we see takes its birth and has its origin ; and that just as profitable action is only possible by being the outcome of what has been thoroughly thought out, and profitable thinking a thing out is only possible if based upon principles ascertained by long observation, so, in things religious, profitable Church work is only possible by being the outcome of qualifications for regulating it thoroughly understood, and that regulative qualifications to be thoroughly understood can only be possible when they have been acquired in the silent school of

prayer and contemplation. We can appreciate an angelic being when he stirs the pool of life, and by that stir brings about the beneficent healing of our sores ; but we do not appreciate so well the fact that that angel starts from an unseen heaven from whence his powers are derived, and wherein he is linked to a chain of higher angelic agencies leading direct to the throne of God. To be concerned only with the lower links of a chain because there their tension can be seen in lifting the weights of mortals, and to ignore those which are above simply because they are out of view—although they bear not only the weights which are on the lower links, but also the weight of the lower links themselves—is not, in the truest sense, ‘ practical ’ ; for, in the long run, if attention is only given to the chain at its nearer parts, while the further are left unconsidered, it will at length become broken, and then that practical work be both damaged and delayed. It may well be questioned whether it would be possible to be carrying on the practical administrative work of the Church to-day, as it is, if those gone before had not largely done our thinking and contemplating for us. We have only to bear in mind such names as those of St. Columba and Iona, St. Aidan and Lindisfarne, St. Augustine and Canterbury, to remember how much the regulative and administrative work of the Church in our land to-day had its origin in the great religious contemplative orders

of old : as the broad rivers of earth, which regulate the boundaries and habitations of nations, and administer to their necessities and pleasures, come from the far-off hills whose silent summits are hid in the skies above, from whence they distil those dews that generate the river-making streams which then flow into the plains below. At the Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion at Lambeth Palace in 1897, the resolution was passed and reported that: 'We recognise with thankfulness to Almighty God the manifold tokens of His blessing upon the revival of Religious Communities in our branch of the Church Catholic. . . . We desire to secure to Communities all reasonable freedom of organisation and development. Such freedom is essential to the due exercise of spiritual gifts.' And then follow helpful suggestions for the realising this development. The Church of England drew near then to what is revealed in the vision of the first hierarchy above. May she continue to draw near, until the counterpart of that revelation becomes a settled factor of her organisation in our midst to-day.

If we look into the composition of this hierarchy of the contemplative orders we find, as we should expect, that its three ranks or grades reveal to us the three great elements of the contemplative life itself. First and highest of these ranks, and of all the hosts of angels, come the Seraphim. These, the chiefest in heaven, are only mentioned in Holy

Scripture by Isaiah,¹ where they appear as the proclaimers of Jehovah's holiness. 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory,' is the burden of their song. If the word 'Seraphim' is not derived from an Arabic term meaning 'to be noble,' but from a Hebrew word meaning (not, as often stated, 'to glow with,' but) 'to consume with fire,' in the sense of 'to purify' (and this would be in accordance with their taking the burning coal from off the altar wherewith to purify the lips of the prophet-elect), then the Seraphim are not only the proclaimers, but also the guardians of Jehovah's holiness. The first element, then, in the contemplative life, which these highest angels, the Seraphim, embody and sustain, is that of 'sanctity.'

Following the Seraphim comes, next in order, the second grade in this choir, the Cherubim. These are the special guardians of the 'knowledge' of Jehovah. The Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, Philo, so describes their function ; and the Fathers of the Christian Church also teach the same. The Rabbis regarded them as youthful angels ; and in answer to the question 'What is the meaning of Cherubim ?' gave the reply, 'The word Cherubim is equivalent to a growing child.' They are depicted in art as with the faces of children, since it is childlike purity of heart and childlike simplicity which

¹ vi. 2-7.

are the requisite qualifications for knowledge. They had their representation in the 'oracle,' or 'Holy of Holies,' in Solomon's Temple,¹ where God's Word was heard and made known. Like knowledge, which 'runs to and fro over the earth,' they are described as 'flying'² with lightning speed.³ They also shade, with outstretched wings, the Mercy Seat,⁴ since, in the initial stages of approach to God, it is mercy and 'truth' which meet together.⁵ But these angels of 'knowledge' are joined to the Seraphim, the angels of 'sanctity,' the rank in order above them. It is knowledge in connection with, not apart from, holiness, which is the great teaching they emphasise. They *ward off* from the tree of Life all who have *unholily* sought to partake of the tree of knowledge,⁶ while, on the other hand, they *call and invite* into the mysteries of God those who have entered into the heavenly state.⁷ It is in exemplification of this same position which they take in regard to holiness that, while represented, as we have seen, within the oracle of the Holy of Holies, they are also shown on the veil which shields that Holy of Holies from profanation.⁸

Next to the Cherubim come the 'Thrones.' These are they who are mentioned by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, where he tells us that

¹ 1 Kings vi. 23-29. ² Ps. xviii. 10. ³ Ezek. x.

⁴ Ezek. xxviii. 14a; Heb. ix. 5. ⁵ Ps. lxxxv. 10a; lxi. 7b.

⁶ Gen. iii. 24. ⁷ Rev. vi. 1, 3, 5, 7, R.V. ⁸ Ex. xxvi. 31.

the Father created all things by the Son, both 'in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.'¹ This rank of angels, being the third of the orders of the Contemplative Choir, and so coming immediately above the first of the orders of the succeeding Regulative Choir, occupies a position in which all the elements of contemplation form a 'throne,' or seat, or basis for that work of regulation and administration which is thence to flow forth from them. It is from this point in the Contemplative Choir that the Regulative and the Administrative Choirs take their governing course of procedure. The Thrones, in the supreme and holy work of contemplation, embody and safeguard all knowledge born from its sanctity, and put it into that shape by which it forms a 'throne' or directing basis for all that then is to profit by it. These three elements of the contemplative life as manifested by this first hierarchy of angels, if applied to a religious community of some contemplative order on earth, might be then said to stand for, first, the holiness of its members, their real unworldliness of spirit and personal sanctification, their life of holy services, fasting, and discipline; secondly, their life of divine study in the Word of God and in theology, in its various branches and departments; and, thirdly, their work of reducing and putting

¹ Col. i. 16, R.V.

this forth in such a shape and form as shall make it a useful basis for the service of the Church's regulative and administrative work in her discharge of those duties to the world which she holds in commission from her Master.

But we must not limit this teaching from the contemplative orders of the angels to the sole sphere of a religious community. These angelic-taught truths contain great and fundamental principles which belong to the Church as a whole, and never were more needed to be considered than to-day. For to many trembling sheep of Christ's flock, what are their heavens seem to be shaken. They had thought their 'throne' of Holy Scripture, that divine knowledge of the sanctified Church embodied into a shape which can apply a basis for all regulative and administrative Christian life, was established. But, so in their distress it appears to them, the Cherubim, out of whom that throne is formed, have been wearing but masks. Those child-like faces they had trusted in providing for their souls a resting-place, seem now but a mocking taunt of a childishness which has been all their own, a childishness which—almost with shame—they should quickly put away. To what are they to turn? they ask. Where is the throne of truth on which their lives can be established? What would be the security for the knowledge which makes it? And what, again, would be the security

for that? And the answer comes from the contemplative orders: 'Fear not. The Thrones are linked to the Cherubim, as the Cherubim are linked to the Seraphim, and the Seraphim are linked to the likeness of God's Holiness itself. Sanctity is the basis of all. Try the spirits by that. Come what may, holiness can never be inconsistent with itself, nor ever therefore lead astray. Its outward form of speaking may appear different at different times, inasmuch as words which it uses may be discovered to have different derivations from those which we had supposed, but the character of holiness itself, which speaks to us by these words, can never be anything but the same, and therefore the truth which through these words it declares, be they what they may, is ever one and the same also. The first question in sifting truth, in such a case as this which we are considering, is not "What has been spoken?" but "Who has spoken it?" If Holiness has spoken it, then, come what may, Holiness can never be a contradiction to itself. Could we, the first hierarchy of the angels above, have remained in our eternal, impregnable order, had anything else been the case?' This, then, is what the angels put to us: are those who come forward with what appear to us new teachings, men who are truly spiritual? We are to decide what they say by that. For though things spiritual enter into mundane conditions, yet, inasmuch as

they also are under laws which are higher than any which belong to all other things on earth, they cannot be solely measured and weighed and judged as would be anything else which is mundanely conditioned. A substance charged with electricity cannot have its appearances and movements criticised precisely as would that same identical substance elsewhere, apart from that electric current. A person, to judge here aright, must either be experimentally acquainted with, or else humbly admit the presence and confess his ignorance of, in this particular case, a new and super-added element. Were he not to do so, all his criticisms and conclusions would be at fault. The more clever and brilliant, too, his mind, the more ingeniously and plausibly would his every error of explanation be argued and sustained, and the more misleading, to the unwary, would he become ; so that the acuteness of his mind in itself, which in other circumstances would be the ground for our following him, being divorced from an acquaintance with this differentiating element, is here the very ground for our being at every point distrustful of him. So is it, and so will it ever be, so long as the eternal laws which govern angels are the same as those which govern human beings, with all who venture to measure and weigh and decide upon that Book which, while having things in common with what all other books have, yet has also a

something of its own which no other book possesses. Have, then, those who judge it an experimental knowledge of this differentiating element? Are they men who are spiritual, as well as men who are intellectual? Without the former qualification what will the latter do for them (except it be the more cleverly to lead them wrong) in things which can only be discerned by a faculty which is in correspondence with that differentiating element? For the knowledge of the things of God we must go to our saint before our *savant*; not to cherubim who have become dislocated or fallen from their fellowship with seraphim, but to cherubim that are allied with and subordinated to seraphim.

Passing to the second of the hierarchies, that of the choir of the Regulative orders, there come before us, first, the 'Dominions' or 'Dominations' (Kuriotētes). These are they to whom St. Paul alludes when, writing to the Ephesians, he says that our Blessed Lord was raised and set by the Father 'far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named.'¹ In his Epistle to the Colossians,² which we have already quoted, we get the same word in the plural. Considering the context, and what is parallel with the passage, it would seem that St. Jude is referring to this angelic order when he describes traitorous members of the Christian community as, amongst other things,

¹ i. 21, R.V.

² i. 16.

those who 'despise dominion.'¹ In the earliest lists of the angels which have come down to us, the 'Dominions' were known as amongst the highest grades. This order, first in the Regulative, and therefore nearest to the Contemplative Choir, accepts from the Thrones the fruits of Holy contemplation duly arranged into a basis for regulation which is to follow, and, under God and as His special ministry for this, transmutes them into that form first required for regulative purposes—namely, as the Greek word of their title and its derivation implies, into that of great 'heads' or 'founts' of regulation. These are the fruits of contemplation as they are first seen in the 'Lordliness' of that attitude in which they appear, when they come forth for the purpose of definite application.

Following the Dominions come the 'Virtues' (Dunameis), the second of the three grades of the Regulative Choir. The Greek word of their title, translated in connection with the heavenly orders as 'Virtues,' is translated as 'powers' in Rom. viii. 38, and 'might' in Eph. i. 21 ('power' in Revised Version), while in 2 Thess. i. 7 it also is translated 'power' (the passage being literally 'angels of power of him'). But since the other Greek word of the title of the next grade of this choir is also translated 'power' in a larger number of passages in the New Testament, this word here for *this* order

¹ Verse 8.

is termed, as stated, 'Virtues.' It is the word used by our blessed Lord when He said that He perceived that 'virtue' had gone out of Him, after the hem of His garment had been touched by the woman who was then immediately healed.¹ In other connections in the New Testament it is also translated 'virtue,' as well as sometimes 'might,' 'ability,' 'strength.' These angels teach us that when, in regulative work, the position of 'headship' is taken, it must be taken firmly. The first quality of recognisable leadership and control must be 'strength.' The word 'virtue' is akin to that of 'virile,' meaning 'that which pertains to a man' ('vir' being the Latin word for 'man'), as distinct, for instance, from the word 'puerile' which means 'that which pertains to a boy.' It has been sadly remarked sometimes that men who have been known and looked up to as 'strong' previous to their elevation to some post of 'dominion,' have seemed, upon being raised to that post, to become more deferential to the world, and proportionately spiritually weaker. This order in the angelic choir, embodying and sustaining as it does the element of strength in connection with dominion, rebukes any just cause for such a remark as this. Amongst the holy angels, spiritual strength, not weakness, flows from positions of responsibility.

But this regulating strength is exceedingly

¹ St. Mark v. 30.

tender. The strong lordship of the angels has nothing in common with the 'lording it over others' of the world, as this the next, the third rank of this choir, comes forward now to tell us. These are the 'Powers.' The Greek word of their title (*Exousiai*) is in some passages of Holy Scripture translated 'authority,'¹ but in others, as taken for the title here, it is translated 'power.'² It is a word which is compounded of two other Greek words ('*ex*' and '*eimi*'), meaning 'to go out,' that is, here, to go out of ourselves towards others' needs and concerns. It is, perhaps, the corresponding term to our word 'influence,' which means our 'inflowing' or 'flowing in' towards others, regulating them by the instilling our thoughts (as they are given us from above) into their minds, our purposes into their wills, our desires into their hearts. As Lacordaire finely says, 'The only coercive force of the Church is persuasion.' It means the constant flow of the stream from us to them; never working to seek popularity, or adulation, or praise, or even gratitude, which would be to reverse the stream, and to turn it from them to us. We should then cease from 'influencing,' really, and ourselves be the influenced, or those 'inflowed'; and the 'power' would therefore, not be *from* us, but *to* us. Thus this beautiful order embodies and sustains that particular

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24; Eph. i. 21, R.V.; 1 St. Pet. iii. 22.

² Eph. i. 21; iii. 10; vi. 12; Col. ii. 10.

teaching of God which shows that all strength which does not come with a '*suaviter in modo*' is instinctively debarred by those towards whom it is exerted, and so, becoming thrown back upon itself, ultimately discovers itself to be no 'power.' For posts of responsibility to give forth regulating strength, which at the same time is also to be a 'power,' there must be that which these blessed angels are called into existence to emphasise—namely, the giving it forth in the spirit of self-sacrifice: remembering that men, as angels, are free-willed beings, not logs of wood or stone; and that if the supreme Regulator above, the Son of God Himself, so reverences that free-will with which the heavenly Father has endowed His creatures, that, so far from battering it down or trying to overwhelm it, He will even die to win it, how much more should we act in that same spirit in our dealings towards each other.

Last in order of the three hierarchies comes the choir of the Administrative Angels, the first grade of which is that of the 'Principalities,' or 'Princedom.' The mention of this order, as we have seen, comes in most of the passages of Holy Scripture where allusion is made to the ranks of the angels. The Greek word of their title (*Archai*) is always translated by the Authorised Version 'Principality,' or 'Principalities,' as the case may be, when applied to this angelic order, with the exception of 1 Cor. xv. 24, where it is translated 'rule.' It is also

translated 'rule' by the Revised Version (but not by the Authorised Version) in Eph. i. 21. The Greek word 'Archē,' which is its form in the singular, means 'beginning,' 'the outermost point in space,' &c. When all the holy Contemplative Angels, in their several degrees, have finished their work for any given matter, and when all the Regulative Angels, also in their several degrees, have taken up that work and shaped it ready for action, then what is it that remains as the next step to be fulfilled? Just that which is specially committed to this rank, the head of the Administrative Choir—the step of initiation. Oh! that Grace of initiation! How we do well to honour those who, like these holy angels here, after the 'what ought to be done' has been thought out, and after the 'how it should be done' has been planned, in regard to some great and pressing need, come then forward with those special graces and gifts with which God has endowed them for this very purpose, and do that blessed work of 'beginning,' initiating what is required—those true spirits of faith in God who 'give substance to things hoped for,'¹ the principals, the prime movers, in every work that is good.

But true initiation involves 'the sacred duty of delegation'; as the initiator of some great public work has his chiefs or foremen, who extend, or repeat, his initiation in those particular departments or spheres of that work which is allotted to

¹ Heb. xi. 1, R.V. M.

them, and for which they have their own and special gifts. Such chiefs amongst the holy angels form the second order of this third, the Administrative, choir. They are the Archangels. An Archangel is mentioned by St. Paul in connection with the Second Coming of our Lord, though he does not tell us his name.¹ And St. Jude speaks of St. Michael as 'the archangel.'² As with the special spheres, and with the special gifts for those spheres, of the initiating activities of the Holy Spirit Himself, in His present office of Supreme Administrator to the world—the number of the archangels is seven. In the Book of Tobit, which the Church tells us to read for example of life, St. Raphael states that he is 'one of the seven'³; and this appears to be their number in Ezekiel.⁴ Of these seven, Holy Scripture gives us but the names of the two just mentioned, together with that of St. Gabriel, and, in the Book of Esdras, that of St. Uriel.⁵ St. Michael appears as the great administrative initiator in the whole conduct of that war upon the earth which is being waged between the forces of good and evil. Replacing Lucifer, who then became Satan, at his fall, the charge of this planet as regards angelic ministries seems to have succeeded to him, and he appears as the leader of all those angel hosts who, in co-

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

² Verse 9.

³ xii. 15.

⁴ ix. 2.

⁵ 2 Esdras iv. 1 &c.

operation with the Church, are now engaged in entirely wresting this world from Satan and bringing it back again to God. It is in this aspect that he comes before us in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, where we read that ‘ Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ’¹; as of old he had warded off the devil from his attempts to interfere with the body of Moses²; and, again, that evil spirit which, dominating the heathen influences of Persia, had endeavoured to hinder a message coming from heaven to Daniel³; while afterwards we find him gathering the hosts of heaven in order to come to the aid of Daniel’s people, that is the people of God.⁴ His beautiful name, which signifies ‘ Who is like God ? ’ reveals to us that the object of all that he initiates in his administrations for the carrying on of this warfare, and the great secret of his power in doing so, lies in this—his recognition of the sovereignty of God in everything. St. Gabriel, whose name signifies ‘ the strength of God,’ appears to be the initiating administrator for all that appertains to the supplies for this war. While St. Michael exemplifies that spirit of righteous intolerance of all that is evil, St. Gabriel teaches us that it is out of our very weakness that God will impart to us the requisite strength for carrying out that righteous intolerance, till Satan is trodden down under our feet. Hence St. Gabriel is the

¹ xii. 7. ² St. Jude 9. ³ x. 13, 21. ⁴ xii. 1. .

messenger of the Incarnation, both to Daniel, to whom he shows that there will one day arise a strength superior to the worst of tyrannies¹ when Messiah shall come²; and to Zacharias, informing him that he would be the father of St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ,³ and rebuking him for his doubt of God's power⁴; and to the Blessed Virgin herself, announcing to her that it was she who was elected to be the mother of the Blessed One Himself.⁵ By some St. Gabriel is believed to be the angel who strengthened our blessed Lord when he seemed to 'reel amid that solitary fight' in the garden of Gethsemane. The Greek word there used, as Dr. Mason points out, is a remarkable word, implying that the angel communicated to our Lord some inward spiritual force. But, further, if St. Michael is the chief administrator of the plan of the campaign, and if St. Gabriel is the chief administrator of all that appertains to its supplies, St. Raphael, we might say, is the chief administrator of all that appertains to the medical and hospital department in this war—the binding-up and healing of those wounds caused by the ravages of sin and the battle waged against sin. His name signifies 'the healing of God,' and we find him sent to cure Tobit from a disease from which he suffered in his eyes,⁶ and to

¹ viii. 16 &c.

² ix. 25 &c.

³ St. Luke i. 13 &c.

⁴ 18-20.

⁵ 26 &c.

⁶ Tobit iii. 17.

preserve him from danger both of body and soul. He is also believed by some to be the angel that stirred the waters of the pool of Bethesda, after which, whosoever first stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.¹ If we endeavour to gauge the office of Uriel, who converses with and explains things to Esdras, and draw an inference from the title he bears, which is a proper and safe indication to follow, and which signifies 'the light of God,' we may, perhaps, regard him as the chief initiating administrator of all that appertains to the intelligence department, so to speak, in this spiritual conflict below, serving alike St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, in keeping each informed about the others.

Finally, working with and under these Archangels, come the multitude of the heavenly hosts, which form the third order of this the third, the Administrative Choir, the rank and file of the armies of God, generally known by the simple term 'angels.' The word 'angel,' as we have already pointed out, signifies a messenger; for wherever they appear, and in whatever they do, these pure spirits reflect and declare some attribute of God. As the great wrestle of the warfare is not for a part of, but for the whole of the world, they appear before us throughout the pages of Holy Scripture in connection with all its departments. Some of them pre-

¹ St. John v. 4.

side over the forces of nature ; some over the policies and doings of nations ; but chiefly they come before us as ‘ ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation.’¹ We find them doing this, as we trace them down the record of Scripture, first for the chosen family, then for the chosen nation, especially in the two periods when Moses and Joshua had departed and the great prophets were not yet arisen, and when it had gone into captivity ; and then, and now, and above all, for the Church, the Body of Christ ; watching, as we saw at the outset, and learning from her history, joying over every single repentance that adds another child of God to her ranks, ceaselessly ministering to and guarding her members, joining in her acts of worship, carrying her faithful departed to Paradise, and finally reaping her completed numbers into the garner of heaven at the last.

Thus this Angelic Choir of the Administrative Orders teaches us that our time on earth is no time for sloth, or sinful ease, or dallying. We must do the good we can, and fight the good fight, while there is time ; and each of us in his own department. Of these departments, they tell us, none are excluded. It is the whole lost world, and nothing less than the whole lost world, which is to be recovered and brought back to God. The man of science dealing with the mysteries of nature, the statesman and the

¹ Heb. i. 14, R.V.

citizen who deal with problems of human life, and above all, the member and worker of the Christian Church, the initiated Kingdom of God in our midst,—these, one and all alike, have their part which they fulfil towards the bringing about of that final consummation, ‘God’s will done, as in heaven, so on earth.’

Our Lord, who gave us this thought as the point from which our study was to start, brings us, in following it, back to it again as our goal. He Who led us into these heavenly ranks that we might see something of how His Will is being done in heaven, now brings us through these ranks back again to earth, that we may more perfectly serve Him here from what He has just shown us there. How wonderful is Jesus in His dealing with His flock, His blood-bought flock on earth! To make the word of His teaching more glorious, more transcendent to that flock, yea, even to but one soul within it, He will use nothing less than the whole hierarchies of heaven, with all their manifold orders, and with all the great laws of spirituality and corporate life in which those orders are contained, as but a single page or scroll from which He may converse with His redeemed, and teach that redeemed one of his trials and his life. To all who hear His voice as He converses from this scroll, indeed,

‘Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.’¹

¹ *Macbeth* iv. 3.

How doubly precious, too, to have from Him this page in days like our own, and so with its special message to ourselves; telling us—when society around us seems to be drifting more and more into materialism, when, in the words of Wishart to John Knox, the Christian ‘wearies of the world, perceiving that men begin to weary of God,’ when things held as unquestionable and Divine are being discarded as *effete* and of a bygone age—that we have another society, a society of ‘innumerable hosts, the general assembly of angels,’ to which we *are* come,¹ which is heavenly, filled with pure unsullied joy, eternal.

O most Blessed Jesus! Redeemer, Saviour, Friend! Higher than all angels and every creaturely existence! I am not worthy of Thy speaking to me by such a page as this. Make me to become more worthy. Teach me how, henceforth, more perfectly than ever before, in the sacred Eucharists of Thy Church, with these Thy holy angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.

C. H. S.

¹ Heb. xii. 22, R.V. M.

CHAPTER V

The Seraphim

The Seraphim

Who keep their eyes most keenly fixed on God.

DANTE.

A SERAPH winged. Six wings he wore, to shade
His lineaments divine ; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad came mantling o'er his breast
With regal armament ; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs, with downy gold,
And colours dipped in heaven ; the third, his feet
Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,
Sky tintured.

Milton.

The Seraphim

'EXCELLING IN LOVE'

To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.—
Te Deum.

Above Him stood the seraphim : each one had six wings : with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar : And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips : and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.—Isaiah vi. 2-3, 6-7.

HERE is the *locus classicus* of the Seraphim, the single mention within the Canon of the Scripture. It is suggestive in the highest degree, and without dwelling on the immediate circumstances of the vision, we may go on at once to follow up some among the various trains of thought that open out before us as we read.

I

'With twain he covered his face.'

The Seraphim are the pattern of reverence. It is

nothing but the simplest truth to say that the higher a being is in the scale of creation, and the loftier the character, in exact proportion is the grace of reverence. For reverence is the recognition in ever-advancing clearness of the true, the noble, and the greater than itself. It is the attitude of the artist and scientist, in their various gifts and ways, in the profounder view and study of nature. And reverence at its highest power and its fullest expression—that is, as it contemplates the infinite—is worship. The deeper the perception, the more intense is the recognition. We touch the climax of reverence in all that is below the incarnate life, as we watch the adoration in the highest courts of heaven. The Seraphim exhibit thus symbolically the largest capacity for the realisation of God that belongs to a purely creaturely existence. They reflect His glory and celebrate in antiphon His praise.

Yet not in celestial isolation. They ‘by their presence and actions suggest new and fuller conceptions of God’s ineffable majesty.’¹

‘The heavens are not too high,
His praise may thither fly.
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.’²

The mission of the Seraphim to men is at every

¹ Dr. Skinner.

² George Herbert.

point before us, and reverence, Dr. Liddon told us in a memorable sermon, 'is not one of the most popular virtues at the present day.'¹ It is even less so at this later date. Things have travelled fast in the generation that has elapsed since 1873. The lack of reverence is at once a most painful feature of the time, and the source of manifold ills. The frankly brutal, or the cynically polished, repudiation of ties and sanctions, the contempt of amenities and institutions, are too patent to escape notice, and too ominous for our disregard. In the State as in the Church, in the social life as by the hearthstone, this preservative of wholesome living is conspicuous by its absence. And the lack is fatal. It needs must spell disaster. Progress is no advance without it :

' Make Knowledge circle with the winds,
 But let her herald, Reverence, fly
 Before her to whatever sky,
 Bear seed of men and growth of minds.'²

II

' With twain he covered his feet.'

It is the mark of the lowly in spirit. His feet are covered in token of unworthiness. If Adam would fain conceal himself, thus miserably mistaken, and

' Vainly shun the Presence dread,'³

¹ *Easter*, ii. 107.

² Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

³ *Lyra Innocentium*.

the instinct here is different and right. For closely allied with reverence is that sense of imperfection that is expressed by the gesture of concealment—nay, it is an integral part of it. Here we have a paradox of the spiritual life, as with Simon, who fell down at Jesus' knees and cried, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' when he of all men was the first to own that without Him he could not live. As reverence, we have been told, is sincerity face to face with greatness without us, so humility is sincerity face to face with sin and demerit within us. It is an *a fortiori* argument from the unfallen Seraphim, to 'vile earth and miserable sinners.' In this respect the splendid force of alike the Evangelical and the Oxford movements is for the moment deplorably arrested. Each was a school of introspective honesty. William Wilberforce at the close of his glorious career seemed to himself an 'unprofitable servant.' It was only in the reflection, 'we serve a gracious Master, Who will take the will for the deed,' that he found comfort. The many who have read the closing utterances of the saintly Bishop Hamilton will recall their note of deepest self-abasement. A lesson needed surely among ourselves. The flippancy, and even insolence, with which subjects the most sacred are handled to-day is indicative of much beyond itself. Worthily to acknowledge our unworthiness is the first and the last step in 'a journey, difficult, toil-

some, perilous, and full of change.’¹ And we may truly add,

‘It is not when man’s heart is nighest heaven
He hath most need of servant-Seraphim—
Albeit that height be holy, and God be still.
Nay, but much rather when one, flat as earth,
Knows not which way to grovel, or where to flee
From the overmastering agony of sin.’²

III

‘With twain he did fly.’

In exact proportion with reverence and humility we have spiritual alertness in heavenly places. Activity is but another name for growth, and growth is alike the token and the condition of life. There are solutions in the hereafter of the apparent contradictories of space and of time. ‘In coelo quies’ is the stay of the weary and the heavy laden, and yet the Seraphim cease not day or night (and, indeed, ‘there is no night there’) their unceasing song, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts.’

And these are media of communication between the Heaven of heavens, and things so ‘toilsome and incomplete’³ that are here below. Their activity is twofold. It is the movement of those who dwell before the Beatific Vision, the ministerial energy of those who invite ‘us, weak worldlings, on

¹ Church, *Dante*.

² Myers.

³ Church, *Cathedral Sermons*, 218.

our way.' The Tersanctus ceases never, but 'the whole earth, also, is full of His glory.'

The lesson for ourselves, the teaching of the Seraph's flight, is not hard to seek. Activity manifold is writ large on life in our modern world. Nor is there wanting in its ceaseless movement the element of multiplied, unselfish work. The increase in enterprises of philanthropy, at any rate, is far too marked for the denial of the most inveterate cynic. The particular prompting of the Seraphim is either noted, or deficient, according as the energy of helpfulness has, or has not, true relation with God as its point of departure. This is not to ignore or to undervalue, for a moment, ministries of mercy that are thought to be independent of Divine motive. Happily we have no experience of a world where the fruit of the Cross is unknown. The lessons of the true life are oftentimes practised unconsciously, and in this sense, too, men 'know not what they do.'

But take a career, the ministerial responsibilities of which are unreservedly recognised, and which proceeds on the lines of the revealed Word. It may be within or without the ordained priesthood, or the religious vocation, technically so called, but there is no mistaking it. Its vital power is 'hid with Christ in God.' The personality has its sustenance, its force, its influence, in union with the One Mediator. It contemplates, and in the

strength of that it has seen and known, it works its work betimes.

It may have, it probably has, fallen to the lot of most of us to watch such a life in its progress. We have seen the priest, the minister of the Lord, in his continual waiting on God, instant in intercession, recollected in meditation, supported by the Bread of Life, passing from the sanctuary to the squalor and misery of the suffering and the lost, content to pass the days and years amid conditions that could not but kill down all hope save what 'springs eternal' from a Divine Source. We have seen the disciple of the Master from whose life has passed away in turn well-nigh each thing that human nature counts essential—health, and means, and power of enjoyment—and yet whose invalid couch has been that centre in the household to which all in turn have bent their steps, the old in his age, the young in their youth, secure of sympathy, of being *understood*. The sketches are from real life, and yet many who read will think they can identify the persons meant. For the service of the Seraphim in worship and in work is ceaselessly perpetuated here upon earth, and the lowest responds to, and is one with, the loftiest in the twofold service of their Lord. It is 'pure religious service, and unpolluted before our God and Father.'

IV

And this brings us to their special work. Excelling in love themselves, their 'finished love makes perfect.'¹ The perfecting of the saints is the function of the Seraphim. 'Having a live coal . . . which he had taken from off the altar . . . he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'

The gift that the Seraphim bring is twofold. It is first the atoning efficacy of the altar that is conveyed to the prophet, for the fire is sacrificial.² It is next the charisma of prophetic inspiration.

Fire is the blessed and most merciful purifier. There is an interpretation of the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,' to the effect that 'the anointing of that Spirit (Whose energy is the "Fire of Love") was as a flame, amidst which He, in the freedom of Filial obedience, offered Himself up to God.'³ And for ourselves the first necessity of the better life, here and hereafter, is that 'by the merits and death' of Him Who made, 'by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,' we 'may obtain re-

¹ Dean Colet.

² Dr. Skinner.

³ *Speaker's Commentary* on Heb. ix. 14.

mission of our sins, and all other benefits of His Passion.' And then that we 'may daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more till we come to God's everlasting Kingdom.' It is thus we speak with those new tongues that indicate a heart transformed, it is thus that we too prophesy, forth-telling the glory of God.

The Seraphim are as 'a flame of fire.' Their ministry to men is a ministry of love, beginning in it and having it by the Holy Spirit as an end.

' In will and deed, by heart and tongue,
With all our powers Thy praise be sung,
And love light up our mortal frame,
Till others catch the living flame.'

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart . . . for love is strong as death ; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord.'¹ It was a great rule laid down by a master of the spiritual life in our own times never to omit day by day to pray beyond all else for 'that most excellent gift of love.'

Long ago Cardinal Newman taught us that we 'begin with faith, that we may go on to holiness.'² We may add to it the saying of Canon Liddon, that we begin with awe, and we go on to love. It is the Christian course in epitome.

What might we not do towards mutual perfection if we were followers of the Seraphim ! We

¹ *Canticles*, viii. 6.

² *Parochial Sermons*, vi. 115.

think it a great matter if we refrain from casting a stumbling-block in our brother's way. So much of what the best of us do is only negative, and there is all the wealth of positive endeavour unattempted. 'I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and keep Thy commandments.' It were well if we lived far more, deliberately and consciously, in the society of the invisible world. It were well if we recalled each time that we 'went into the Sanctuary of God' the words of one to whom reference has already more than once been made: 'In worship we learn the manners of a higher sphere, and fit ourselves for companionship with saints and angels, and for the everlasting sight of the Face of God.'¹

 ' With His seraph train before Him,
 With His holy Church below,
 Thus unite we to adore Him,
 Bid we thus our anthem flow :

 " Lord, Thy glory fills the Heaven ;
 Earth is with its fulness stored ;
 Unto Thee be glory given,
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord." "

J. G. T.

¹ Liddon, *University Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 77.

WHEN we consider what glorious beings the angels are, and yet that they are but creatures of, and servants to, the God whom we serve, waiting before His Throne, and humbly attending His commands ; this consideration, if we let it sink deeply into our hearts, must needs possess us with most awful apprehensions of the glorious majesty of our God at all times, but especially in our approaches to Him in His worship, and fill us with the greatest reverence and humility. We should do well often to call to mind Daniel's vision, to whom was represented the ' Ancient of days sitting upon His throne, a thousand thousand ministering unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him.'¹

With what reverence should we behave ourselves in our addresses to the Divine Majesty, before Whom the Seraphim themselves hide their faces ! And if they cover their feet, are conscious to themselves of their natural imperfection, compared to the infinitely glorious God ; how should we clods of earth, we vile sinners, blush and be ashamed in His presence, assuming no confidence to ourselves, but what is founded on the mercies of God and the merits of our blessed Redeemer and Advocate, Jesus Christ !

And when we find ourselves inclined to pride and vanity, to think highly of ourselves and of our services to God, let us reflect at what a vast distance

¹ Dan. vii. 9, 10.

we come behind the holy angels ; how far short our poor, lame, imperfect services are of their holy and excellent ministry. Yet, when we think of the ministry which the holy angels perform towards God, and for us ; let us at the same time propound them to ourselves, as patterns and examples for our imitation.

Although in this state of mortality we shall never reach the perfection of angels, yet, by aspiring to it, we shall certainly become much better men ; and if we come short of what we aim at, we shall nevertheless far exceed what we are. As, therefore, we hope to be equal to the angels (in a blessed immortality) hereafter, so let us study to be like them (in holiness and righteousness) now. Let us emulate their exalted love, the source and fountain of all the excellent services they perform to their Creator, ‘ by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength.’¹ We have one reason to love God which the angels have not, and that is, the forgiveness of many and great sins : the most endearing obligation. And as they continually laud and praise the great and good God, and Lord of all things, so let us pay the daily tribute of our praise and thanksgiving to Him, according to our utmost powers in this state of infirmity. And when we consider their fervent love and charity to us, in their earnest desire and study of our good and welfare, and in their most ready diligence to do all good offices for us ; let us then remember, how much more we are

¹ St. Mark xii. 33.

obliged to love and assist one another, who have the same common nature, passions, and infirmities, and therefore stand in mutual need of each other ; whereas the holy angels are above any benefit or advantage, which even the best of us can contribute to them. Let us admire their condescension, in that they, being creatures so glorious, should so willingly stoop and humble themselves to minister to us sinful dust and ashes ; and let us from hence learn the excellent lesson, ' By love to serve one another,' when charity requires it, not to disdain or refuse any good office we can do our neighbour, though it be otherwise servile, and seemingly beneath our dignity.

Thus the holy angels are our patterns.

Bishop Bull (1634-1710).

BLEND our musics into one !
The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,
Their shining faces lean,
And mix th' adoring breath,
And breathe the sweet thanksgiving.

E. B. Browning : 'The Seraphim.'

CHAPTER VI

The Cherubim

Cherubim and Seraphim

.....
Their bonds of love thus swiftly they pursue,
Their power proportioned to their lofty view.

DANTE.

The Cherubim

THE Cherubim, usually classed by Christian teachers as belonging to the second rank of the celestial hierarchy, are thought of as pre-eminent in the gift of *knowledge*. As the Seraphim, loving God with a perfect love, know Him perfectly ; so the Cherubim, knowing Him perfectly, therefore love Him with a perfect love.

There are in the sacred Scriptures five chief allusions to the Cherubim, some very brief, others more in detail, to guide us when thinking on the Orders of Angels, and desiring to learn some lessons of a practical nature.

I—THE SENTINELS OF PARADISE

He placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—Gen. iii. 24.

Thus, in judgment, but also in mercy, these, who knew what God is, guarded the precincts of His manifested Presence, keeping them from profanation on the part of sinful man, and man him-

self from the extreme danger of an approach, unprepared by atonement, to his insulted God.

For the judgments of God are not the product of vindictive anger; they have their motive in His infinite love. His severity is only His goodness, manifested in another manner. Now that man had learned by fatal experiment the knowledge of evil, the fruit of the tree of life would have been poison to him. In God is the fountain of life, but to come near to Him in a nature saturated by sin would be inevitable death. Therefore is Paradise closed to the unforgiven sinner, and the Cherubim, embodiments of created wisdom, wisely keep the way of the tree of life. Their message for awhile to sinful man is 'Depart'; but when the mystery of God's love in man's restoration is finished, the Seer of Patmos shall hear the voice of one and other of the Cherubim, and their word shall be 'Come.'

The ancient disciplinary system of the Christian Church was grounded on the principle of the Cherubim. Impenitent and half-penitent sinners, known by their deeds to be such, or not as yet having given evidence of their repentance, were excluded for long terms from approaching the tree of life, the life-giving mysteries of the Eucharist, and this in mercy, lest they should be, not healed, but hurt, by unworthy communion. That system has long ago, and in all parts of the Catholic Church,

broken down. For good men, though holding high office as bishops and priests in the hierarchy of the Church, have not the knowledge or the wisdom of the Cherubim, and have often made fatal mistakes in attempts to wield the flaming sword. Still, the Church holds the power of excommunication, however seldom it can be used with good effect. As it is, the wilfully sinful are apt to excommunicate themselves rather than to be excommunicated. And the general absence of external discipline may, under providential guidance, tend to more thorough self-discipline, of which St. Paul says that 'if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' Only we would have those who, though nominally Christians, refuse themselves the central privilege of Christians, bear in mind that permanent and wilful self-exclusion from participation of the sacramental tree of life on earth may lead, *ipso facto*, to exclusion from 'the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God' in heaven.

For God will not exclude from heaven and its eternal life any who are prepared for it ; yet He must exclude the unprepared. And this, not in judgment only, but in mercy. It would be no happiness to the unrepentant and unforgiven soul to find itself in heaven. Heaven would itself be hell to it ; and the flaming sword of the Cherubim which shall exclude at the Great Day will itself be wielded in pity to the poor lost ones.

II—THE ATTENDANTS AT THE MERCY-SEAT

And he made two cherubim of gold ; of beaten work made he them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. . . . And the cherubim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another, toward the mercy-seat were the faces of the cherubim.—Exodus xxxvii. 7, 9.

These were but visible symbols ; but, like the other ritual accessories of the tabernacle worship, they were visible symbols of realities, invisible to men. When the Shechinah, the glory-cloud of the Divine Presence, descended, God ‘dwelt between the Cherubim’ in a mystery ; and His sentinels at the gate of Paradise were represented as attending upon Him still. Now, not wholly to exclude, nor fully to invite, human approach to the Holy of Holies. That approach was still guarded by most stringent conditions. Only once in each year might even the high priest come close up to the manifested Presence, and then only as the type and promise of the true Mediator of the coming dispensation, and only with the blood of sprinkling, as evidence of the typical sacrifice which gave promise of the real and perfect sacrifice of Calvary.

But there were the forms, gleaming with golden wings, their faces turned downwards towards the place of the veiled Presence and of the blood of Atonement, as long after angels should bend downwards to the veiled Presence on the altar-throne of

the Cross, 'desiring to look into' the depths of that Mystery of self-sacrificing Love of which neither angels nor men can ever tell the length and breadth and depth and height.

And surely not until the Cherubim had seen that sight on the first Good Friday did they, who are the embodiment of created knowledge, know the love of God—how low the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity would, for His infinite love, stoop to win and cleanse and raise His erring child.

Men call God 'unknowable,' and are content not to know Him. Yet known He may be, and is, to every one who in any real sense looks into the Mystery of the Cross, and believes that God so loved the world. The Cross is the one unanswerable proof of Divine Love, silencing for ever the voices of doubt whether we are cared for by Him. It is the final pledge that nothing shall be wanting on His part to bring us safe to the promised land and to His holy hill of Sion. 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'

III—THE STANDARDS OF THE ARMY

The children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard. . . . Over against the tent of meeting shall they pitch round about. And those that shall pitch on the east side shall be they of the standard of the camp of Judah, &c. &c. Numbers ii. 2, 3 &c.

The Israelites, on their way to Canaan, journeyed in four great divisions consisting each of three tribes. At the head of each division was carried one of the four great banners which bore the ensigns of the four leading tribes. When a halt was made the tabernacle was pitched in the centre of the camp, and the four divisions were ranged on each of its four sides. The four banners appear to have been erected, each of them at the head of the division to which it belonged, between its three tribes and the tabernacle. It would seem that the devices on the banners were no other than the forms of the Cherubim as seen afterwards in the visions of Ezekiel and of St. John—the Lion, the Ox, the Man, and the Eagle. The banners with these devices faced the tabernacle on its four sides, and, as it were, did honour to the Presence manifested in the Shechinah.

That Presence was the type and forecast of the Incarnation, when ‘the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we behold His glory.’ The banners of the host, bearing the emblems of

the Cherubim, gave prophetic witness, as should the evangelists, 'the ministers of the Word,' to the fourfold aspect of the Incarnate as the Messianic King, the sacrificial Victim, the Ideal Man, the very God.

The Church, journeying on to her promised inheritance, bears aloft the banners of her King—*Vexilla Regis*. Only as she bears faithful witness to His Kingship, His Atonement, His true Manhood, His perfect Godhead, can she be victorious over the forces of evil. His worship must embody her faith in these foundation truths. Accordingly she recites the great Creed of universal Christendom in the Liturgy, when about to invite the mystical Presence of Emmanuel in her midst. It is with her as when, after each stage of the journey in the wilderness, the tabernacle was set up in the midst, the sacred standards ranged around it, and the chant arose, 'Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.'

IV—THE CHARIOT OF THE CHERUBIM

The likeness of four living creatures.—Ezekiel i. 5.

[See also i. 6–28 ; ii. 13 ; x. 1, &c. ; xi. 22, 23 ; xliii. 1, &c.]

And I knew that they were the cherubim.—x. 20.

He rode on a cherub and did fly.—Ps. xviii. 10.

Ezekiel, the captive priest, saw 'visions of God' by the river Chebar. He described them in language very difficult to understand, and nothing more

than a brief reference to their chief features shall be here attempted.

He sees the glory-cloud of the Shechinah—‘the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord’—surrounded and in some sense supported by angelic forms. To him as a priest these naturally take the shape of the figures of the Cherubim embroidered on the temple veils,¹ and carved on the temple walls.² There are four ‘living creatures,’ who, joined together, and with ‘whirling wheels’ beside them on each side of a square, form a chariot upon which the glory-cloud is borne. There are four faces visible—the same apparently as of the ancient devices on the standards of the host in the wilderness—the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle. Whether each cherubic form had these four faces, or each bore one, is doubtful; to the present writer the latter seems more probable. Each had four wings and two hands, and all moved together and rose together, the sound of their flying like the music ‘of great waters, like the Voice of the Almighty.’

This brilliant vision appears several times to the prophet-priest—at first coming to him in his exile, as though to teach how near the Divine Presence is, however we may be debarred from the usual and covenanted means of access to it. Then he is transported in spirit to Jerusalem, and he

¹ 2 Chron. iii. 14.

² 2 Chron. iii. 7.

sees the glory-cloud, borne up by the chariot of the Cherubim, depart from the polluted temple, and hover near to the once holy city, as though yearning to return on the repentance of the disobedient nation. Then, later on, when the glories of the final Restoration are portrayed in an ideal temple, the glory comes back, 'the earth shines with the glory,' and 'it fills the house,' and 'the name of the city from that day shall be THE LORD IS THERE.'

Among much that is obscure, the connection with the use of the cherubic forms on the standards surrounding the Tabernacle of the Presence is obvious. The true Cherubim are among the hosts of angels who, as they surround the Throne of the Almighty in heaven, so attend on Him in all the manifestations of His covenant Presence on earth. They are our fellow-worshippers, aiding with their perfect worship our imperfect homage, and making music of our unworthy attempts at song. St. John Chrysostom's story of the old man who told of angel forms bending in lowly reverence around the Eucharistic Altar is entirely credible. If our eyes were opened to the spiritual realities, we should see them too.

A yet more solemn thought may well be cherished. The Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision were the chariot of the Divine Presence, and at the Divine bidding 'turned not, but went straight forward when they went.*' We, to whom the Divine Christ imparts

Himself, bear Him with us into our common life. Let us see to it that we too go straight forward to do His bidding, turning not aside from the path of duty to the right hand or to the left.

V—THE LIVING CREATURES OF THE APOCALYPSE

In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures.—Rev. iv. 6 &c.

The cherubic forms of the standards of Israel and of Ezekiel's visions appear again in the sublime visions of the exiled Apostle. To him too the veil is lifted, and he sees in gorgeous imagery the realities, present and future, of the spiritual universe. As around and within the tabernacle and the temple of old, and as in the visions of Ezekiel, 'in the midst of the throne' of God Almighty, 'and round about the throne,' he sees the same four living creatures, the innermost of the concentric circles of worshippers whose outer fringe embraces all rational creation. But now they have six wings like the Seraphim, and they sing the seraphic song of 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' unresting day and night perpetually. Their mission now is not to warn sinners from too near an approach to the Source of life and holiness. Each in turn speaks the solemn invitation 'Come.' Once, indeed, the ministry of chastisement is entrusted to one of their number,¹ as

¹ Rev. xv. 7.

though to impress the truth that Infinite Love persistently refused must inevitably bring bitterest anguish on those who refuse it. But it is their word of welcome which lingers last in the mind of the seer: 'The Spirit and the Bride say Come; and let him that heareth say Come; and let him that is athirst come, and take of the water of life freely.'

That water of life proceeds eternally from the throne of God and of the Lamb. To the glories of the Lamb they bear their fourfold witness:

‘As in the prophet’s vision,
From out the amber flame
In form of visage diverse
Four living creatures came:
Lo, these the wingèd chariots
That bring Emmanuel nigh,
The golden staves, uplifting
The Ark of God on high.’¹

It can hardly be that St. John saw in these forms emblems of the four Evangelists themselves, of whom he was one. Rather, it has been providentially ordered that the Gospel as narrated by the four does wonderfully correspond in the several accounts to such fourfold portraiture as is suggested by the cherubic forms, which respectively tell of the universal Royalty, the atoning Sacrifice,

¹ *Hymns A. & M.* 197, New Edition.

the true Humanity, and the supreme Godhead of Him that sits upon the Throne—the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last, Emmanuel.

The Cherubim, that once kept the way of the tree of life when Paradise was lost, now preach Him Who is the Way to Paradise regained, the Truth and the Life. ‘For this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent.’ For ‘this is the true God and eternal life.’

To the song of all loyal creaturely life the Cherubim of the Apocalypse add their response :

‘The four living creatures said Amen.’

They know, and therefore they love. We know enough to love Him Who has so loved us. Let lives of loyal love be our responsive Amen.

E. E. D.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.—Rev. ii. 7.

THEREBY reversing Adam’s doom : ‘The Lord God said . . . now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever : Therefore the Lord God sent Him forth from the garden of Eden . . . and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.’

Thus the eastern gate, the gate of light, shut out man into darkness ; immortal Cherubim barred him from the precincts of life ; flame repelled him into the cold of death ; until the times of refreshing should come from the Lord, and to Christ's brethren every loss should be made up, yea, and much more also.

Christ is our Tree of Life . . . even now whilst, please God, we are overcoming, though we have not yet overcome. . . . He, 'the Branch,' foretold by prophets, He 'the True Vine,' revealed by His own lips, He now is mankind's centre to which turn eyes and hearts. Long ago the Tree of Life so stood in the midst of Eden, and so in vision St. John beheld it stand in the midst of the street of Holy New Jerusalem.¹

If we could forget the Vine's sweetness, can we forget how it left its sweetness to become our King ? If we could forget the Tree of Life, can we forget that tree of death whereon Christ hung that so He might be indeed our life ?

O our Saviour, grant us grace to love Thee in and above all Thy gifts, and to love Thy gifts because of Thee.

'The Paradise of God' : were it not 'of God' it would not be Paradise. 'In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

¹ Rev. xxii. 2.

Paradise is God's by right, man's by grace. In its midst Christ, Very God and Very Man, stands symbolised by the Tree of Life.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894).

SERVICE and strength, God's Angels and Archangels ;
 His Seraphs fires, and lamps His Cherubim :
 Glory to God from highest and from lowest,
 Glory to God in everlasting hymn
 From all His creatures.

Princes that serve, and Powers that work His
 pleasure,
 Heights that soar to'ards Him,
 Depths that sink to'ards Him ;
 Flames fire out-flaming, chill beside His Essence ;
 Insight all-probing, save where scant and dim
 To'ard its Creator.

Sacred and free exultant in God's pleasure,
 His Will their solace, thus they wait on Him ;
 And shout their shout of ecstasy eternal,
 And trim their splendours that they burn not dim
 To'ard their Creator.

Wherefore with Angels, wherefore with Archangels,
 With lofty Cherubs, loftier Seraphim,
 We laud and magnify our God Almighty,
 And veil our faces, rendering love to Him
 With all His creatures.

Christina Rossetti.

CHAPTER VII

Angels round the Throne in Worship and Praise

From choir to choir I heard Hosanna swell
Towards the fixed Point, which keeps them steadfast there
Where they have been, and shall for ever dwell.

DANTE.

Wondrous beings, who, ere the worlds were made,
Millions of ages back, have stood around
The Throne of God.

J. H. NEWMAN.



ADORING ANGELS.

(Benozzo Gozzoli.)

Angels round the Throne in Worship and Praise

Et ideo cum Angelis et Archangelis, cum Thronis et Dominationibus, cumque omni militia coelestis exercitus, hymnum gloriae Tuae canimus, sine fine dicentes, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria Tua; Osanna in excelsis; Benedictus Qui venit in nomine Domini; Osanna in excelsis.—*Sarum Missal.*

THE prophet Isaiah saw the glory of God and the worship of Angels about the Throne of Heaven. The earthly setting of this sublime vision was the Temple at Jerusalem, thereby foreshadowing the truth that the temples of the New Covenant, from the most glorious cathedrals of Christendom to its simplest 'Upper Rooms' and mission Chapels, were destined to be the scenes of worship by angels and men of the Eucharistic Presence of 'the Lamb as it had been slain'; a worship transcending the 'Ter-Sanctus' of the Old Covenant, which foreshadowed the consummation of the mystery of redeeming Love; inasmuch as the 'Ter-Sanctus' of the New Covenant, revealed to St. John at Patmos, set forth the union of the worship of Heaven and

earth in the fullness of the Divine Glory of an accomplished Redemption.

Isaiah saw 'the Lord, sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.' 'Above it stood the Seraphim,' the angels of burning love, and fervent zeal; 'each one had six wings'; 'with twain he covered his face,' with that humility wherewith the angels veil their faces before the white light of Infinite Holiness and Purity; 'with twain he covered his feet,' in the conscious mystery of obedient service; 'with twain he did fly,' with the swift might of intelligent power, derived from the Lord of all Power and Might. 'And one cried to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. . . .' The vision of the Divine Majesty filled Isaiah's soul with the consciousness of his own sinful humanity. 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.'¹

We see here the Seraph, as the Angel of worship, linking fallen humanity to the heavenly Altar, so

¹ Isaiah vi. 1-7.

that Isaiah might be able to join the Worship of Heaven, and become a fitting messenger for the Lord of hosts. But what means were employed by this ministering angel of worship? Do we not see in the 'live coal' from the altar, a foreshadowing of the Mystery of Redemption? The heavenly Altar is the scene of the perpetual pleading of the One Sacrifice of the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world. The Eucharistic mystery of worship, sacrifice, and communion is here prophetically set before us. The 'live coal' from the altar manifests the Objective Reality of the Divine Presence. It is quickened by the Spirit; it is 'alive,' though the 'form' of the coal be there. The Body and Blood of our Blessed Lord are verily and indeed present on the Altars of the Catholic Church 'militant here on earth' 'under the form of Bread and Wine,' even as they are upon the altar of heaven. The ministry of the Seraph, and the imagery of the 'live coal,' shew us that the Altar of heaven and the Altars of earth are one in the dignity and mystery of the Sacrament of our Redemption. The angels of heavenly Worship not only unite with us in the Eucharistic 'Ter-Sanctus,' but are guardians, witnesses, and ministers of our praise, our prayers, and our worship, as we celebrate the Holy Mysteries on our altars.

We turn now to Ezekiel's vision of the Cherubim, the four 'Living Creatures' that encompassed the

Throne of the Most High. The mystical description of the Cherubim in the first chapter of Ezekiel cannot be reduced to any definite conception of their appearance. Ezekiel was highly favoured of God ; but, like Isaiah, he was compassed with the infirmities of fallen humanity. We need not conceive that Ezekiel's description of the Cherubim was a piece of symbolism, set forth for us to interpret. Its very obscurity and difficulty rather point to the fact that mortal eyes, even when illumined by the Holy Ghost, could not convey definite impressions of the glories surrounding the Throne of God. The most that Ezekiel could do was to record in the language of earth, so far forth as was possible to him, the mysteries of Heaven. The Cherubim appeared as the immediate ministers of the Throne of God. 'They turned not when they went ; they went every one straight forward,' to execute the Will of God. They 'ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning,' swift to obey the Divine Commands. Thus much we can realise amidst the mystery of their 'faces,' their 'wings,' and their 'wheels.' They ministered to the central majesty of the Throne of Ezekiel's vision—the Throne of God Incarnate. 'Upon the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a Man above upon it. . . . This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord. And when I saw it,

I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.' ¹

These visions of the Angels of Worship, revealed to Isaiah and Ezekiel, express one most important truth. They teach us how clearly the subconscious idea of the Incarnation was impressed upon the minds of God's saints under the Old Covenant, and thus indirectly witness to the truth that the Incarnation was not an afterthought of God, caused by the Fall of Man, but was eternally present to the Divine Will and Purpose, before the creation of angels and men—things 'visible and invisible.' This prepares us for the continuation and expansion of the Old Testament visions of the Angels of worship in the New Testament. The Synoptic Evangelists tell us of angels ministering to men, and to our Blessed Lord Himself. St. Luke, as the historian of the Church Primitive, tells us of St. Peter's deliverance from prison by his guardian angel. . . .

The first Vision of Patmos was the unveiling of the Likeness of our Lord in glory. What Ezekiel saw but dimly 'as the appearance of a Man,' St. John saw with eyes enlightened by the Eucharistic Presence. He was 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's Day. But we may not here dwell on that Divine Portrait. We pass on to the 'open Door in Heaven' to which it gave St. John entrance and admission.

¹ Ezek, i. 8-14, 26-28.

We must consider the testimony of the 'beloved disciple' on the worship of angels about the Throne. He gazed into the mysteries of heaven, as Isaiah and Ezekiel had done before him, but his insight was clearer than theirs, because his eyes had seen 'the King in His Beauty'; he had looked upon the glorious vision of the Risen and Ascended Redeemer. Let us listen to his own words: 'And immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and upon the throne One sitting. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald.' The subsequent singing of the 'Ter-Sanctus' by angels and saints shows us that He that sat on the throne is the 'One in Three, and Three in One,' as Cornelius à Lapide rightly interprets the vision. Cornelius aptly parallels 'the jasper and the sardine stone' with Ezekiel's vision of the Divine Radiance, 'as the colour of amber; as the appearance of fire round about within it.'¹ The rainbow is the sign of the Incarnation, and Bede says, of its hue of fadeless emerald, that it reminds us of 'that inheritance, which fadeth not away, of the saints who are aiding others by their prayers.'

And then St. John saw: 'round about the throne, four and twenty thrones: and upon the

¹ Ezek. i. 27; viii. 2.

thrones four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature was like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within, and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.’¹

We see in the crowned elders upon their thrones a revelation of the Church triumphant. ‘The cloud of witnesses’ of Hebrews xii. 1, ‘the spirits of just men made perfect.’² Moses and Elias, and the embodied saints of St. Matthew xxvii. 52, reigning as ‘kings and priests’ to God, and St. John’s further vision of Rev. xii. wherein he saw the glory of ‘the woman clothed with the sun,’ the second Eve, the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mother of God, typifying in the exaltation of her own person the

¹ Rev. iv. 4-8.

² Heb. xii. 23.

dignity and the glory of the Church of the Redeemer, —all these, severally and united, compose the glorious company of the throned saints of the heavenly Kingdom.

The four Living Creatures recall Ezekiel's vision of the Cherubim. They have 'six wings,' even as the Seraphim revealed to the raptured gaze of Isaiah, and, in a manner, they combine the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

An early tradition of Christian symbolism and art linked the vision of the Four Living Creatures with the Fourfold Gospel of the Four Evangelists. St. Irenaeus was the disciple of St. Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of St. John. He brought the Johannine traditions of Ephesus and the East to his Western See of Lyons, and, writing about A.D. 182, he maintains the fourfold unity of the Gospels from the analogy of the Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision. 'The Divine Word . . . sitteth upon the Cherubim, and holds all things together; Who, having been manifested to men, gave us the Quadri-form Gospel, which is held together by one Spirit. For the Cherubim of Ezekiel had four faces; and their faces are emblems of the Son of God. For the first Living Creature (saith St. John) is like a lion, and symbolises the Royal Power of Christ; the second is like a calf, signifying His Sacrificial and Priestly Office; the third had, as it were, the face of a man, and shows His Advent in our human nature;

and the fourth, like a flying eagle, shows the gift of the Spirit hovering with His Wings over the Church. And therefore the Gospels are in accord with these things, and Christ Jesus sitteth upon them. . . . Such as was the form of the Living Creatures, so was also the character of the Gospel. For the Living Creatures are quadriform, and quadriform also is the Gospel.'¹

The Venerable Bede applies to the living creatures collectively the words of Psalm xlv. 'It is the Bride,' he says, 'all glorious within,' and at the same time 'wrought about with divers colours' without. Haymo says, 'that, besides the Gospels they represent the Lord Jesus Christ and all His Saints.' We may well believe that the Living Creatures collectively represent 'Mount Zion, the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and the spirits of just men made perfect.'² In the adoration of the Lamb—the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Worship of Heaven, we find the four Living Creatures saying 'Amen.'³ We may conclude then that the worship of the angels, centred upon 'the Lamb as it had been slain,' in heaven and on earth, and expressed by the angelic 'Ter-Sanctus,' is included in the idea of the four Living Creatures and

¹ *Adv. Haer.* Bk. iii. c. 8.

² Heb. xii. 22, 23.

³ Rev. v. 14.

their adoration. It is worthy of note that the Western Liturgies follow the earliest form of the liturgy of St. James, or the Syrian liturgy, in the 'Ter-Sanctus.' They use the Old Testament form instead of that of the Apocalypse, and Archdeacon Freeman believes that the 'Ter-Sanctus' of Ezekiel was used by our Lord at the Maundy-Thursday institution of the Holy Eucharist.¹

It seems evident that the Old Testament form of the 'Ter-Sanctus' had become rooted in the Divine liturgy of the Church before St. John wrote the Apocalypse, and that the 'Ter-Sanctus' of the New Law, as revealed in the Apocalypse, was considered to be the equivalent of Ezekiel's form of words. It unites the worship of the Church militant with the worship of Heaven. Its place in the liturgy, immediately preceding the canon, which enshrines the act of consecration (whereby the Bread and Wine 'become to us the Body and Blood of Christ'), is of deep significance. It unites us with the worship of Angels and Archangels, and lifts our souls to Heaven to prepare them for the supreme moment of the Consecration itself, when we bow in worship before the Eucharistic Presence of our Lord. At that supreme moment our worship on earth blends directly with the worship of Heaven. The Angels and Archangels of the 'Sanctus' cease not from their endless hymn of praise. Its echoes

¹ *Principles of Divine Service*, ii. 360.

blend with the worship of the 'Lamb as it had been slain' on our earthly Altars, as a deep undercurrent of harmony to our *Benedictus*, *Agnus*, and *Gloria in excelsis*. The abiding thought of our earthly harmonies of Eucharistic praise and worship being thus blended with the endless song of the angels is the highest safeguard of our reverence.

We are helped to realise the mystery of the Eucharistic Presence of our Lord 'because of the angels.' The thought of *their* veiled faces helps us to veil *ours*. The thought of the sublime and eternal concentration of their worship aids us to centre our thoughts upon the 'Lamb as it had been slain.' And, as a further thought to aid us, we remember that our own guardian angels have their part and lot in the angelic "Ter-Sanctus." Their part in the mystery of Praise is not only to take their own share in it, but to help us to take ours. The guardian angel of the Priest ministering at the altar is aiding him to carry out his ministry of sacred dignity and mystery—a ministry which even angels are not empowered to discharge—a ministry reserved for mortal men when our Lord said, 'As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'

The guardian angels of the priest's assistant ministers at the Altar;—of the singing clerks and choristers, who are striving to fashion earthly harmonies 'after the pattern of the Mount';—the guardians of the people who are earnestly taking

their part in the Divine liturgy with hearts up-raised to God ;—these angels, who are the Divine Warders and Watchers of our holy things, have their definite office in guarding us from vain thoughts and keeping our souls in the true pathway of reverence, so that our ‘Ter-Sanctus,’ however faint or imperfect be its harmony, should yet ring true with theirs.

Let us follow once more the vision of the Seer of Patmos. ‘And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.’ The Lamb of God (Agnus Dei, Qui tollis peccata mundi!), with the ‘seven horns’ of supreme dominion, through the Kingdom of His Body, the Church ; and the ‘seven eyes’ ; the seven illuminating gifts of the Spirit of Pentecost, which inform and inhabit the Church Catholic by the grace of His Sacraments and the power of His Life ; is here revealed in His Glory.

‘And the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. . . . And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders : and the number of them was ten

thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. . . . And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.’¹ This heavenly picture of Worship is beyond the scope of human Art, however spiritual be its conceptions. And yet Van Eyck’s altar-piece representing ‘The Adoration of the Lamb,’ touches our hearts by the very inadequacy of its reverential treatment and presentment of the Worship of Heaven.

We cannot gaze on it unmoved.

But besides this worship of the Lamb by the heavenly host and the Church triumphant, which is revealed in the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse, we find later on a most significant act of worship offered by a single angel. Six of the mysterious seals of God’s Book had been opened by the Lamb, Who is the lion of the tribe of Judah. ‘John heard of a Lion,’ saith St. Bernard, ‘and beheld a Lamb; the Lamb opened the book, and appeared a Lion.’ The sixth seal was opened, and the servants of God were sealed on their foreheads. ‘The great multitude that no man could number,’ the Church of the redeemed ‘clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands,’ were offering their eternal hymn of praise.

¹ Rev. v. 6-14.

And then the seventh seal was opened, the prelude to the mystery of the seven trumpets. 'There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.'¹

The silence reminds us of the Day of Atonement under the Old Law. The people are praying in silence without the tabernacle 'at the time of incense.'² The high priest has gone into the holy place. Here are the figures of the True Tabernacle and its worship. Our great High Priest pleads His One Sacrifice before the Altar of Heaven. His priests on earth are pleading, in His Name, and by His power, the same Sacrifice, as His chosen representatives—as the organs of the Body of Christ.

It is the moment of the Consecration.

There is silence—the silence of adoring worship.

'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.'³

The Western Liturgies have most fitly incorporated this heavenly vision of the angel offering incense before the Golden Altar into the Canon of the Mass. It takes the place of the Eastern 'Epiklesis' or invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the

¹ Rev. viii. 1.

² St. Luke i. 10.

³ Rev. viii. 3-4.

Eucharistic Offering. The eminent French liturgical scholar, Mgr. Duchesne, says: 'But whilst the Greek liturgies use here clear and simple terms, the Roman liturgy embodies its meaning in symbolical forms. It prays that the Angel of the Lord may take the Oblation from the visible Altar, and bear it to the highest Heaven, to the invisible Altar, before the shrine of the Divine Majesty. This symbolical transference is in a contrary sense to that implied in the Greek formulary; it involves not the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the oblation, but the elevation by God's Angel of the oblation to Heaven. But in both cases alike it is after it has been brought near to, and has participated in, the Divine Virtue that it is called the Body and Blood of Christ.'¹

The same prayer appears in the Ambrosian Liturgy of Milan. Here are its actual words: 'Supplices te rogamus, Omnipotens Deus, jube haec perferri per manus sancti Angeli Tui, in sublime Altare Tuum, in conspectu Divinae Majestatis Tuae, ut quotquot ex hac Altaris participatione sacrosanctum Filii Tui Corpus et Sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione coelesti et gratia repleamur.' This prayer appears in these words in the Sarum Missal and our other English uses, and may thus be rendered: 'We humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, that Thou wouldst command these to be

¹ Duchesne's *Christian Worship*, p. 181.

borne by the hands of Thy Holy Angel unto Thine Altar on high, into the sight of Thy Divine Majesty, so that as many of us as by partaking of this Altar have received the Holy Body and Blood of Thy Son, may be fulfilled with Thy Grace and Heavenly Benediction.'

This touching and venerable prayer, which links the Altars of earth and the Altar of Heaven, appeared in the English Canon of the Prayer-book of 1549 in a form which still embodied a portion of its meaning: 'And although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Thee any sacrifice; yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, and command these our prayers and supplications, by the ministry of Thy Holy Angels, to be brought up into Thy Holy Tabernacle before the sight of Thy Divine Majesty.'

We may remember here, too, that the Angel of St. John's vision offered incense as he approached the Altar of Heaven. Here is the justification of our offering incense at the Canon. Its rising clouds of sweet savour remind us of the Worship of Heaven and the prayers of the Saints. And so Angels and Archangels, the whole Company of Heaven, and our own guardian Angels, aid in our Eucharistic Praise and worship. The incense of the Angel of offering, in his individual ministry, reminds us that we are not alone in our Eucharist. We join the incense of our prayers with the great cloud of Heavenly incense—

the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, and the prayers of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, the Saints of the Church Triumphant. The more we ponder the mysteries and the realities, visible and invisible, which encompass our earthly Altars, the nearer we shall be to God in Christ.

Hitherto we have thought exclusively of the office of the Holy Angels of Praise and Worship, as linked to the Sacrifice of the Altar. We may close with the thought that the angels of Praise may well link their worship with the sacramental life of the Church generally. Holy Baptism is the *janua sacramentorum*. Are not the holy angels rejoicing around this 'entrance gate' of the Kingdom? Surely the beautiful conception of the sculptor Thorwaldsen, so well known to many of us in the font of Inverness Cathedral, is not a mere artistic imagination. The angel holding up the Baptismal Font represents a living truth. Our baptisms are normally those of infants. We forget the fierce struggles of heathens, and even adults in a Christian land, who are being prepared for Baptism. Repentance and Faith must be wrought out in them as antecedent conditions of their baptism. And we think of St. Bernard's words, 'the tears of penitents are the wine of angels,' and thus we believe that the angels of God rejoice over the repentance and faith of the newly baptized.

There was a division of opinion in the Church as to the time when God appoints the Angel-guardian to watch over each of the souls of men. Some thought that this guardianship had its beginning at the Font of Baptism, and gave as their reason that the Angel-guardians are sent to minister exclusively to the 'heirs of salvation.' It is evident that we do not become 'heirs of the Kingdom' until we are baptized. But St. Thomas Aquinas holds that this is too narrow a view.—There is a wholesome breadth of outlook in the theology of the greatest of the schoolmen.—He says that our guardian angels enter upon their office as soon as we are born into the world.¹

Surely then the guardian angel of an infant, one of the little ones 'whose angels do always behold the Face of the Father,'² rejoices over its baptismal sealing and regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost, no less than the guardian angel of a convert from heathenism or misbelief whose baptism takes place 'in riper years.'

In like manner the guardian angels rejoice when the sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit are imparted through the Sacrament of Confirmation to those souls over whom they watch. The same applies also to the gift of the Holy Ghost in the Sacrament of 'Holy Orders,' and we may likewise believe that in Holy Matrimony and the Anointing of the Sick, the

¹ *Summa*, i. Q. cxiii. A. 5.

² St. Matt. xviii. 10.

special grace given to the recipients calls forth its own special joy in the angel appointed to care for each soul that receives it.

We may ask ourselves how shall we best realise our communion with the Holy Angels whose ministries and service are thus linked with ours 'in a wonderful order'?

We may believe with Origen that 'the angel of each one of us, even of the little ones in the Church, both prays with us, and acts with us in those things about which we pray, wherein it is possible.'¹ We may believe, with St. Basil, that 'some of the Holy Spiritual Powers, who have their places in Heaven, are called *eyes*, from being entrusted to watch over us; others *ears*, from receiving our prayers'²; and, with St. Hilary, that 'the authority is absolute that angels preside over the prayers of the faithful; wherefore angels day by day offer up to God the prayers of those who are saved by Christ.'³

A. T. W.

In the midst of the Throne . . . stood a Lamb as It had been slain.—Rev. v. 6.

AROUND Him are three concentric circles of adoration. The inmost proceeds from the four mysterious creatures and the four and twenty elders who 'have harps, and golden vials full of odours,

¹ *De Oratione*, xvi. 215. ² Hom. in Ps. xxxiii.

³ In St. Matt. xviii.

which are the prayers of the saints.' These are the courtiers who are placed on the very steps of the Throne; they represent more distant worshippers. But they too fall down before the Throne, and sing the new song which is addressed to the Lamb slain and glorified. 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy Blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' Around these, at a greater distance from the Most Holy, there is a countless company of worshippers: 'I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Beyond these again the entranced Apostle discerns a third sphere in which a perpetual worship is maintained. Lying outside the two inner circles of conscious adoration offered by the heavenly intelligences, there is in St. John's vision an assemblage of all created life, which, whether it wills or not, lives for Christ's as for the Father's Glory: 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' This is the hymn of the whole visible creation, and

to it a response comes from the inmost circle of adoring beings, ratifying and harmonising this sublime movement of universal life. 'And the four creatures said, Amen.' And how does the redeemed Church on earth bear her part in this universal chorus of praise? 'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own Blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'¹

H. P. Liddon.

They rest not day and night.—Rev. iv. 8.

I SUPPOSE by *rest not* we may understand *cease not, pause not, flag not*; their endless worship being an endless contentment, their labour a labour of love, their exploration of unfathomable mysteries as it were a skylark's ever-ascending flight; yet even at the same moment, as his sustained exaltation at his zenith on poised wings.

Rapture and rest, desire and satisfaction, perfection and progress, may seem to clash to-day; to-morrow the paradoxes of earth may reappear as the demonstrations of Heaven.

These Living Creatures compounded of multiplied gifts and multiform beauties concentrate themselves in worship. Their worship is due exercise of their gifts; the exercise of their gifts is worship. 'Day and night.'—Yet we look for no night there. Meanwhile though the ebb and flow of time sway not the

¹ Rev. i. 5, 6.

natives of heaven, their perpetual adoration runs parallel with our night and day; they worship while we wake, and worship on while we sleep. Alas, for us, if while they rest not from worship, we worship not either while we labour or while we rest.

Christina Rossetti.

There was silence in Heaven.—Rev. viii. 1.

THERE is an eloquence that lives not in words. There is a power of expression, a power of influence, which all of us ere now have owned, that never breathed itself away in sound. There is an appeal to the heart, and to the reason too, in the language of silence. The silence of a desert land. The silence of the sea. The silence of the mountain top. The silence of old associations. There is a silence too amongst men that speaks most unmistakeably—the silence of deep feeling, whether of sorrow, or rage, or attention, or determination, when men have ceased to speak, because they feel words are out of place and the time of work has come. . . .

For all great works great preparation is needed. And is not silence the condition of real work—of most work with the hand, of all real work with the head?

Silence is the attitude of listening and attention. In the silence of thought, in the silence of humility, in the silence of reverence, in the silence of deep feeling, in the silence of earnest determination, we prepare an offering of prayer and praise.¹

¹ Hab. ii. 20.

Deep silence has precluded many acts. The silence of the night preceded the Angels' song that told when Christ was born; deep silence reigned around the Cross while Jesus finished redemption's work; deep and solemn silence there is, we are told, in heaven—there, in the very temple of God, the silence of expectation, and of awe and wonder; and while that silence lasted the 'smoke of the incense rose up before the throne of God, which is the prayers of all the saints.'

If we would tune our voices to sing the songs of God aright, let us listen in silence to catch that note of holiness, the note of a spirit that holds communion with God. If we would direct our prayers aright in any way, let us concentrate ourselves by silent preparation and discipline, that we may improve every gift we have, that we may still have a strong and steady stream of strength when the way becomes long and the work ceases to be attractive! . . .

Tuned to the one key of God's Glory, make your life one noble melody, weaving in, in mystic harmony, all chords of joy and sorrow, difficulty and success, till death puts in a rest, and after one more silence the music bursts forth again, taken up by the choirs of Heaven.

G. C. Harris.

How shall I sing that Majesty
 Which Angels do admire?
 Let dust in dust and silence lie;
 Sing, sing, ye heavenly quire!

Thousands of thousands stand around
 Thy throne, O God Most High ;
 Ten thousand times ten thousand sound
 Thy praise ; but who am I ?

Thy brightness unto them appears ;
 Whilst I Thy footsteps trace,
 A sound of God comes to my ears ;
 But they behold Thy Face.
 They sing because Thou art their sun :
 Lord, send a beam on me ;
 For where heaven is but once begun,
 There hallelujahs be.

How great a Being, Lord, is Thine,
 Which doth all beings keep !
 Thy knowledge is the only line
 To sound so vast a deep.
 Thou art a sea without a shore,
 A sun without a sphere ;
 Thy time is now and evermore,
 Thy place is everywhere.

Who would not fear Thy searching Eye,
 Witness to all that's true !
 Dark Hell and deep hypocrisy,
 Lie plain before Its view.
 Motions and thoughts before they grow,
 Thy knowledge doth espy ;
 What unborn ages are to do
 Is done before Thine eye.

John Mason (1683).

CHAPTER VIII

Certain Characteristics of the Angels

In la sua voluntade è nostra pace.

DANTE.

Listen through God's mysteries,
Listen down the heart of things ;
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmuring with loving.
Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
How we live by loving.

E. B. BROWNING.



THE BURIAL OF S. CATHERINE.

Luini.

FLOW on, flow on to Heaven from whence ye rise,
Ye blessed harmonies,
And waft us on your breast unto your parent skies ;
Attune our spirits here below
To order and obedience meet,
Such as there is in that blest seat
From whence ye flow.

Obedience—it is love,
And where love is is harmony,
Therefore the stars that range above
Throughout the infinite in order roving,
As through the shoreless space they fly,
We deem to thread their maze to music high,
In some melodious measure moving ;
And all we know of Angels blest,
Is that they love and they obey,
And sing always,
Ever singing, ever loving
In the mansions of their rest,
Around the throne where God is manifest.
And what we music call below
Is something thence that doth o'erflow,
Like a golden stream of light
From the infinite ;
Here in matter dull unfolding
And our earth-sick hearts upholding ;
And therefore like electric chain
It hath a power in souls to reign,
And rivet with a sadness sweet,
Like voices come to exiles lone from their abiding
seat.

Isaac Williams (1802–1865).

Certain Characteristics of the Angels

WE are surrounded by Angels, those pure and heavenly beings, we move amongst them, we speak and act in their presence ; and yet many of us think very little about the Holy Angels. It is with them as with so many other objects of faith, they are 'out of sight,' and therefore 'out of mind.' They may often be as thickly gathered around us as they were gathered around the servant of Elisha in Dothan, but it does not please the Lord to open our eyes to see them, and so we are apt to forget that it is one of our high privileges as members of the Church that we 'are come unto' this innumerable company of angels. The Holy Scriptures are full of the mention of angels, from that sad moment in the past when fallen man was driven out of Paradise through these ministers of the justice of God, far on into that bright and glorious future when man redeemed and renewed shall stand with the multitudinous hosts of angels before the face of God, safe in the eternal home from which there is no wandering away for evermore. Anyone who has never read the Bible with a view to noticing this

particular point, would be astonished to discover how full it is of revelations concerning the holy angels. And yet, often as God speaks to us about them, the angels do not live in our thoughts and minds as they should.

Some of the most devout of the servants of God have loved to contemplate these blessed spirits. We read of one of the greatest saints of our Communion, that in his last hours he was lying rapt in contemplation, like one lifted already beyond this world, and that, when his friend asked him on what his mind was fixed, he answered that he was ' meditating the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience, and order, without which peace could not be in heaven, and oh, that it might be so on earth.'¹ Like him let us lift our minds to the angels. There is much to be gained from thinking of them. The thought of their glorious nature may fill us with a great wonder at the power of God who made them. The thought of their number and their closeness to us may impress us with a deep and constraining awe. The thought of their unceasing and tender care for us may quicken in us a more fervent love for God who sends them forth to minister to us. The thought of their constant and unswerving obedience may stir in us a more earnest desire to serve God. The thought of their stainless purity may make us understand what real

¹ Richard Hooker.

holiness is, and so teach us to loathe the stains of sin that still rest upon us, and thus draw us to God with more earnest cravings for that pardon and grace which can change our guilty nature.

And this is the end of all right contemplation of the holy angels,—to fix our hearts more entirely on God. In the very words in which our Blessed Lord speaks of their love and watchfulness, He leads us on beyond their shining ranks up to the infinitely higher glory on which they gaze, the uncreated Glory from which they draw what created glory they have. ‘They do always behold the Face of My Father which is in heaven.’¹

All creation, with its beauty and its order, should draw us up to God—the sun in its majesty, the sparkling rivers, the rolling, heaving sea, the spangled skies, the hues of flowers, the songs of birds, the order and course of the seasons ; all these carry our minds beyond and above themselves up to God. And as all these speak of God, God making, God ruling, God loving, God so far better than they ; as it is idolatry to let the heart rest on these, and not live above them to God ; so it is with these highest of all creatures, the Angels. Their order, their brightness, their majesty, their purity, speak of God ; manifest to us what God is who made them, and carry our minds above their glory to His Glory. We can only think of them safely, when we are

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 10.

determined to learn what He is from observing what they are. Angels and ministers they are to Him. Their every act, and word, and look, witnesses to Him. It is His love, His care, that shows itself in their ministries to us. It is the radiance of His glory which bathes them in light. It is His might with which they are instinct. If they 'excel in strength' it is because God holdeth their souls in life, and suffereth not their feet to slip. Nay, so much is this the case, that one of the greatest writers of the Church says, that it would seem that the very fall of Satan was owing to this, that he wished to attain the blessedness for which he was made through his own strength. Let us then keep this thought in our minds, that in the angels we are to adore the work, and power, and love of God, and how much we gain from meditating upon them! how much we should lose if we did not think of them!

1. How wonderful is the account of their vast *numbers* in Holy Scripture, the 'thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand'¹ of their supernal ranks, the 'more than twelve legions'² that are ready to spring forth to accomplish even one behest of God! What is it to remember that these hosts of God camp round us, that we move in the midst of their serried order, ourselves perhaps only a thin and scattered number in comparison of

¹ Dan. vii. 10.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 53.

their multitude? It may be that these morning stars of the spiritual heavens are spread more thickly round us than the orbs that spangle the natural heavens over us.

2. Then again, what are they by *nature*? How high must they be whom the Psalmist, even with his soul's eye fixed on God, speaks of as 'excelling in strength.'¹

How great must be their *dignity*, when the greatness of the Son of God is described by His ascending up above them.² How great must be their *knowledge*, when our Blessed Lord enhances the mysteries of His Kingdom by saying that there are secrets which are not known even to the angels.³ As St. Gregory says, 'They contemplate the very fountain of knowledge; what must they not know of all that can be known, who know Him that knoweth all things?' How incomprehensible to us is this pure, spiritual nature, unclogged by our grosser flesh.

What a thought that they are with us, when we seem to be alone, watching us, fixing their keen gaze upon us, that even while we speak to others about them, they listen and hear what we say of them. So strongly was the great Bishop Bull possessed with this belief, that he said, when preaching about the holy angels, that he should be careful of his words, as he was speaking in the presence of some of those heavenly ministers.

¹ Ps. ciii. 20.

² Eph. i. 21.

³ St. Matt. xxiv. 36.

3. If we pass from their *nature* to think of their *character*, there is still more to fill us with wonder at its perfection.

How must our Lord rejoice in their willing service, when He teaches us that to please Him we must aim at being to Him what they are. And so we find that the rest of Holy Scripture in agreement with this highest praise, speaks of their lowly, fervent adoration of God, their hearkening to His Word, their constant waiting on Him to worship Him, their watching for signs of His Will, their wondering awe at His loving plans for His Church? ¹ And then springing out of this constant love of God is a no less constant love of what God has made. Thus we read of their songs of joy at creation, their bursts of praise when God was made man to save the lost world, their bending down to watch the working of God's grace in the Church,² their joy in the coming back of sinners to God.³ What a character is here of untiring obedience, of joy in God's worship, of enraptured contemplation of His goodness, of active, earnest work for Him. What a thorough bending of the will to His Will; what a devoting of all powers to His service; what an entire union of the inner spirit with Him.

4. But we must not pass over the special office and work of the angels. Our Lord describes it as consisting in worship, and a guardian care of others.

¹ Eph. iii. 10.

² 1 St. Pet. i. 12.

³ St. Luke xv. 10.

‘ They behold the Face of the Father,’—that is their joy in *rest*. They are special servants of Christ’s little ones, appointed to watch over them,—that is their joy in *action*. They are ‘servants of God’ to do ‘His pleasure.’ He is pleased by them to carry out His Will on earth.

If you ask, Why? we know not. Why does He govern the world by kings and rulers? Doubtless He could govern it without them. Why does He govern the Church by bishops and priests? He could govern it without them, doubtless. Why does He govern the very angels through higher angels? Why are there orders and gradations of ranks even amongst those blessed ones? Why are there cherubim and seraphim, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, virtues, powers, arch-angels and angels? It is enough for us if He so trains all His creatures in obedience, order, and submission. It is more than enough, if He is so pleased to give each in his place the blessedness of having some work to do for Himself. It may be that He hereby knits us in love one to another. It may be that He draws out the affections of the heart by giving us offices of love towards each other. - But at least so it is. He has ‘constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful order.’ Accordingly He has used those blessed ones to chastise some, to help others. Angels drove man in his guilt from Paradise. An angel with his

drawn sword was the messenger of chastisement to Jerusalem ; an angel smote the hosts of Sennacherib ; an angel smote Herod. And as they have been sent by God to carry out His sentences upon the ungodly, so has He used them for ministries of love. When Hagar was fainting in the thirsty desert, an angel relieved her in her distress and showed her the well of water. An angel stopped the mouths of the lions, so that they could not hurt Daniel ; an angel opened the gates of St. Peter's prison ; an angel cheered St. Paul when he was in danger of shipwreck ; an angel brought comfort to Cornelius after his earnest prayers ; above all, angels waited on our Blessed Lord when He was worn with His forty days' fast ; and an angel strengthened Him in the fearful trial of His agony.

And still now, day by day, those blessed spirits work among us. We may not be able to see how or when they help us, but we have God's sure promise that they shall do so.¹ Ever loving, ever ready to do God's Will in aiding us, ever keen and quick of sight to see what threatens to do us harm, ever feeling for us, rejoicing in our repentance, trembling when we are hard of heart ; who can tell what warnings, comforts, inward consolations, and whispers of peace we owe to these heavenly messengers ?

¹ Ps. xci. 11.

There is no good in such high thoughts as these unless we learn to live the better lives for them.

1. Before all things, then, see how wonderfully the love of God comes out in His so ordering that angels should wait upon us. He might have kept us by His own power, but He uses them to give them the joy of working for Him. What love is this towards them? And yet more what love to us! Who are we that the glorious company of heaven should wait on us—we, with all our weaknesses, faults, and sins? Yet what a support and comfort it is to us to know that His Guards are round about us in all dangers and distresses! Not only is the eye of God upon us, but His servants are sent to keep us all through life, to guide, to urge, to restrain us. Yes! even in the last agony they will be with us, and watch over our souls till they have borne them safely to Paradise.¹

2. But then, if the whole work of the angels is ordered by God; if they work for Him, come from Him, how must we the more fix our hearts with all affections on Him! They love us for His sake. If we love Him we shall have their care. 'The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him.'² If we are false to Him we shall be cast out of their company. They can do nothing without Him; they can neither know nor help us. From His Face they gather their knowledge. He

¹ St. Luke xvi. 22.

² Ps. xxxiv. 7.

alone knows the secrets of hearts ; the weaknesses, the temptations, the hidden needs of each separate soul. He alone knows who have a claim on Him, who look to Him ; He alone can see and meet the longings, the aspirations, the faith, and trust of the spirit of each one of us.

3. What a motive we have here for living in union with our Blessed Lord ! The angels are specially sent to minister to us because we belong to Him and bear His likeness. They remember how they waited on Him in the weakness of His birth, in the exhaustion of temptation and fasting, how they strengthened Him in His agony. Our childhood with its wants and weaknesses, the soreness of our struggles against the Evil One, our trials and sorrows, are a memory of all that their Lord passed through, and of their loving ministrations to Him. They see their King, our Brother, on the Throne, and then speed forth to serve Him in us. One moment they are adoring the Blessed Jesus in His glory, gazing on that Face which is the Light and Joy of their spirits, casting themselves down in adoration before that perfect Man who is their God¹ ; and then the next moment they come forth to wait upon us who bear the same nature, seeing in us reflections, oh, how faint, and marred and distorted ! yet still reflections of that same King and Lord ; beholding in us hearts and souls,

¹ Heb. i. 6.

affections, powers of will, of understanding, like in nature to those which the Blessed Jesus has united for ever to Himself. How then should we cleave to Him! How should we seek to have His nature imparted to us ever more and more!

Let us live more consciously under the gaze of the angel eyes that are always scanning us. Think with what a longing for our perfection they must be fixed on us. How anxiously they look for the features of the character of the true, the perfect, the glorified man in us. Surely of all the wonders to the angels *that* must be the greatest,—that one for whom Christ died can forget Him and turn the back on Him. For them He did not die. He is not their Brother. He does not bear their nature. ‘Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels.’¹ No; it was our nature that He took upon Himself. It is our nature which He bears, that we who share that nature with Him may share also the life which He has in Himself as God, that His purity may make us pure, His strength be made perfect in our weakness. How the spirits round His throne who never fell from Him must wonder at the love He has shown in redeeming us! How they must mourn over those who can neglect such love, and despise such gifts. Let them not so mourn over us. Nay, rather let us seek our Lord evermore with an increasing earnestness. Let us crave for

¹ Heb. ii. 16.

more grace, more purity, more love through Him. Then shall we be a joy to those blessed spirits. As we listen and learn the Will of God, they will see in us a growing likeness to their own obedience. As we praise God, they will echo our praises on high. As we kneel at the Altar with souls hungering after His righteousness, they will wonder at His love who feeds us with Himself. As we grow in grace they will adore Him on whose Face they gaze on high, for making us like Himself.

And thus, as time passes and eternity draws on, we shall ripen for a fulness of bliss which even they know not. We shall be purified for a place amongst those blessed ones, whence we shall gaze on the Father's Face with them. Yes ; but for us there shall be this further, this crowning joy which cannot be theirs. We shall remember eternally the power of the Cross of our Lord. The theme of the new song that will be sung before the Throne will be praise to the Lamb that was slain to bring us to God. For ages the praises of the angels whom He has preserved and sustained in light have been echoing round His Throne, but as yet that one burst of grateful joy which belongs to the redeemed has not been sounded in the courts of Heaven. It cannot sound until the gates of heaven have actually opened to receive those whom our Lord has redeemed with His precious Blood. Then will it at length swell out, when, in actual possession of bliss, the

souls of the saved shall understand the fulness of the love of God the Son.

We must speak with awe and trembling when we touch on such a mystery, yet, when we have dwelt so much on the greatness and excellency of the nature of the angels, we must dare to say, that even in the height of that bliss which we may yet share with them, there may be one service of exceeding joy, one height of super-eminent blessing reserved for us. A little lower than the angels we were made. A little lower than the angels was our Head, too, once made, but He is now far above them, crowned with Glory and honour, and in and through Him there is an honour, a gift of unspeakable value which shall be ours, such as even the angels cannot share. We shall have Him to dwell in us, as He can dwell only in those whose very nature He bears. He shall be one with us, we shall be one with Him. He shall be the very life of our being : Himself within us, the very love wherewith we shall love God ; Himself, as it were, the heart and centre of the whole circle of redeemed manhood, out of which the lifeblood of holiness, and obedience, and unity, and all pure affections shall flow to return back to Himself in adoration and a glad and willing service. He Himself will be the cause of the beating of the pulses of the Divine life in every soul of man that has been knit to Him for ever. As ' Christ in us ' now is ' the hope of glory,'¹ so

¹ Col. i. 27.

‘Christ in us’ then will be the height of the glory that man can attain to. We could not have dared to think it, if our Lord had not Himself said to His Father, ‘The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are One : I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one.’¹ If it seems too high for our thoughts to grasp, our hopes to reach to, yet may He in His mighty love, which fashioned the angels and can re-fashion man, grant that we fall not short of that which He has prepared for them that love Him !

R. W. R.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

THE main meaning of this petition of the Lord’s Prayer is this : ‘May Thy Will, O Lord, be done by us, who are of Thy Church on earth, in the same perfect, full, and cheerful way that it is done by Thy servants and ministers in heaven.’ . . . The prayer is the prayer of obedience, and the models of obedience are the Angels.

It is worthy of notice that our Lord hereby teaches us to think a good deal about the angels. We cannot forget or disregard either their existence or offices, if we use this prayer rightly. It is given us for constant use. ‘*Whenever we pray*’ we are to use it ; so that the thought of the holy angels and their obedience is to be constantly present to our minds. . . .

¹ St. John xvii. 22.

The proposing of angels for the sole model of obedience in the Lord's Prayer, gives us a most exalted notion of them, and their perfect submission and performance of God's Will; according to the observation of Hooker: 'As in number and order they are huge, mighty, and royal armies, so likewise in perfection of obedience unto that law which the Highest, whom they adore, love, and imitate, hath imposed upon them, such observants they are thereof, that our Saviour, being to set down the perfect idea of that we are to pray and wish for on earth, did not teach to pray or wish for more, than only that here it might be with us as with them it is in heaven.'¹

We may then turn to the Holy Scriptures to see what particular offices and duties of theirs are made known to us, in order that we may imitate them. Let us consider them first as they are most pure and holy creatures. We know that they are permitted to encircle the sacred Throne of God in Heaven. They behold the Face of our Father. We read in the first book of Kings, 'I saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left.'²

Now this high and glorious privilege of being present with God is the privilege of purity. 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'³ Thus purity and holiness are, as it were, the capacity of seeing God. Wherever God is to be seen, the pure and holy only have eyes to see Him. And He is to

¹ *Eccl. Pol.* I. iv.² 1 Kings xxii. 19.³ Heb. xii. 10.

be seen not only hereafter, in some more literal way, when the pure on earth shall be admitted to His presence and see Him as He is, face to face; but even now in some manner, through a glass, darkly; whilst those who thus behold as in a glass His Glory, are changed by degrees into the same image, from the glory of the Church visible, to the greater glory of the Church invisible.¹

In several places in the Scriptures the angels are called by no other name than 'His holy ones,' as though their purity and holiness were the main quality of their nature, and that which, above all things, made them pleasing and acceptable to God. Let us learn from this, that it is by purity that we shall be able to *see God*, even in the lower ways proper to this imperfect world. We ought to *see God* in His works. Therefore it is by purity only, that we shall be able to learn the natural lessons which the beauty and fitness of all things on the earth, and all the wonderful wisdom and goodness of God shown in the physical and moral arrangements of the world, are fit to teach us.

We ought to *see Christ* in His Church; filling, sanctifying, and glorifying it: His sufferings in her sufferings; His glory in her honour; His Presence in her worship; His Spirit in her holiness; His unity in her peace; His children in her sons;—but we cannot see it without purity.

We ought to discern or see the Lord's Body and Blood in His blessed Communion, feeding the vital union which is between Him and us; and His Blood

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

in Holy Baptism washing souls from sin. But if our hearts are impure we cannot see them. Water, bread, and wine are all that impure and blinded hearts can see. And thus purity gives eyes to faith, and faith apprehends the grace of Sacraments to the purifying and strengthening of souls.

And so if we shall win by the Spirit of God this purity, and thus attain to a blessed resurrection from the dead, we are to be as the pure angels of God: we are to have such holy and immortal bodies, as shall fit us to join their company, and with them to see the Face of our Father which is in heaven.

What is meant by the expression found in several passages of Holy Writ of the angels being 'Sons of God'?¹ Sons they are, as all other intelligent creatures are, by creation. This is the first and obvious manner of sonship; but this meaning will not account for the title of 'Sons of God,' given to the angels distinctively, since it would not distinguish them from many others, to whom the same name, in this sense of it, might be applied. No, they are sons of God, emphatically, as being good sons, dutiful, obedient, affectionate sons; sons who know their relation to their Father, and act according to it; sons who do not disgrace their descent, but in act, and spirit, and desire, and love, exhibit the lines and features of the character of their Father, who imitate because they love Him, and love Him the more as, by imitating, they obtain a deeper and more intimate knowledge

¹ Job i. 6; xxxviii. 7.

of Him. They are the elder brothers of God's family : elder in creation, elder in obedience, elder in present privilege ; elder sons who are ever with Him, and yet feel no jealousy, but rather loyal joy in heaven, when any of the younger outcast prodigals returns, and repents, and says unto their common Father, ' Father, I have sinned against Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.' Thus they are sons, and as sons, objects of our imitation. For we too are sons, having all their obligation, and much more than theirs, to love, and serve, and imitate, in the highest spirit of filial duty, our Father which is in heaven.

The whole opening of the Lord's Prayer receives some light and illustration from this consideration. For it seems as if the idea of the angels may properly be introduced to fill up the interpretation of all the early petitions, in some such manner as this : Our Father, Father of angels and men, which art surrounded by Thine angels in heaven, but not too high to behold the things which are upon the earth, may Thy sacred Name be hallowed by the constant praise and reverence of all this Thy visible and invisible family : may Thy Kingdom, which shall include, not only Thine innumerable hosts who already, as pure creatures, are admitted to Thy presence, but also the quick and the dead of the race of Adam, shortly be filled by the filling up of the number of Thine elect ; and may we, the earthly, younger, probationary members of Thy family, and subjects of Thy Kingdom, learn to copy Thy heavenly ministers in all love, obedience, and per-

formance of Thy Will, which is our only law and happiness.'

Bishop George Moberly (1803-1885).

ALL we read of the Holy Angels seems intended to make us think of their perfect obedience and order. They have each their own place and station assigned, in managing the works of God, or in waiting on His Church.

Thus we read of the angels of certain elements. One, having 'power over fire,'¹ and an 'angel of the waters'² are mentioned in the book of Revelation, and so are certain other angels, whose care was to stand at the four corners of the earth, and 'hold the four winds of heaven, that they might not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees,'³ until the time that God had appointed.

The sacred Scriptures teach us that the blessed angels have each their own appointed task in the several parts of the Almighty's Kingdom, so the order of their stations and services, round the Throne itself of the great King, sets before us perfect obedience and order. 'The angels stand round about the throne,'⁴ not as it may happen, but every one in his place.

And such are the pictures presented to us in the high and wonderful visions of St. John, all of them implying the most complete order and regularity in the heavenly services, so that the course of

¹ Rev. xiv. 18. ² xvi. 5. ³ vii. 1, 3. ⁴ iv. 4 ; viii. 2, 3.

what is done in the Churches of Christ on earth is but a faint and humble shadow of what the spirits of the just made perfect may hope to witness and partake.

In the prophecy of Daniel, again, those blessed assemblies appear to be likened, in some sort, to the courts or judgment-seats of great Kings. 'The Ancient of days did sit': . . . thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.'¹ Now we know what reverential silence, what accurate order, is expected to be observed in the courts of kings, and in solemn assemblies held in their presence; and this may give us some notion of the grave and awful majesty which the saints and glorious spirits continually maintain in His Presence, who is the God of peace and order, not of confusion, and before Whom all are commanded to keep silence.

Now this exact order and perfect obedience of the angels, the station of each in God's temple, and the task of each in His Kingdom, has reference, first, to the glory of God; next, to the welfare and credit of His Church. Each angel had his appointed place, with regard both to Him that sits on the throne, and to the twenty-four elders and four mysterious living creatures, who seem to be types of His Church and Gospel. So, throughout the Book of God, we find this double office assigned to them: they are either 'serving God day and night in His temple,' or they are on their errands as

¹ Dan. vii. 9.

ministering spirits. Their holy, devotional hymns, and prayers, and contemplations, take up all the time which is not employed in charitable waiting on their brethren of mankind. But whatever honour they offer to God, whatever service they do to us all, is done according to His everlasting law, in its own time, and place, and measure ; there is neither too much nor too little of it ; no encroaching by one angel on the province of another, no neglect of his own. Now let us not imagine that this angelical order and obedience is no more to us than a distant beautiful vision. It is both real itself, and it closely touches the duty of every one of us. We should make the angels our pattern, and as they worship and minister, so should we try to do here. God is so gracious as to set before us, His unworthy creatures, the same two objects which take up the mind of His angels. ‘ Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do,’ we are invited to do it all to God’s glory.¹ And when we ‘ wait on the Lord,’ it is to be ‘ renewed in our wings like eagles’² ; strong and active wings, to bear us any whither, where is any Christian to be helped, any bad spirit to be discouraged.

Next, as the angels all know and keep their places ; as the stars do in heaven, to which they are sometimes likened ; as we are bidden to ‘ Lift up our eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number : He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power ; not one

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

² Is. xl. 31.

faileth,'¹ so should the servants of Christ be ready, night and day, and at all times, to answer to their names, when He, as it were, calls them over, and show that they are in their stations, and willing and eager to set about their appointed tasks.

I say, 'their *appointed* tasks.' As one blessed spirit does not force himself into the portion of another, but remains content where he was placed by the heavenly Lord and Master of all in common, so ought it to be in the Church and Body of Christ. Each must mind his own work as each has to bear his own burthen.

Then in the performance of that work we are not to be inventing ways of our own, but in everything, small and great, to watch for some sign from Him: where His Will is plain, as it is, God be thanked, in most matters of daily duty, there cheerfully and punctually conforming ourselves to it, without asking any more questions; where it is at first doubtful, seeking it as best we may with prayer and meditation out of the Scriptures interpreted by the Church.

This way of prompt yet thoughtful obedience is set before us by the psalmist, from the example of the angels. 'Praise the Lord, ye angels of His, ye that fulfil His commandments'—that is, they do it at once when it is plain;—'and hearken unto the voice of His words'²; that is, they listen devoutly to find out His Will, in matters where they do not yet know it.

John Keble (1792-1866).

¹ Is. xl. 26.

² Ps. ciii. 20.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew themselves strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.—2 Chron. xvi. 9.

THE providence of God in the government of this lower world, and therein especially of those who love and fear Him, is in great part administered by the Holy Angels; these, as Philo terms them, are 'the ears and eyes of the Universal King.' The expression alludes to the government of earthly monarchs, who have their deputies or lieutenants in all parts of their dominions; who are, as it were, the eyes by which they see, and the hands by which they act. Not as if God needed the help of angels to oversee and act those things which His own knowledge and power cannot reach to, for He is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent; but this is spoken of God 'after the manner of men,' and must be understood, 'in a sense becoming the majesty of God.' The rulers of this world have their deputies out of necessity, because they cannot govern without them; but the Universal King hath His ministers out of choice, because He is pleased for very good reasons to make use of them.

That by 'the eyes of the Lord' are meant angels of God, is plain enough from the words themselves, which clearly express the every employment constantly attributed to the holy angels in Scripture, of being sent 'running to and fro through the earth,' to exercise their power in the protection and security of good and upright men.

In the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Zechariah we have a vision of seven lamps in a golden

candlestick. The interpretation of the vision is thus given : ‘ Those seven ; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth.’¹ Now what those seven eyes of the Lord are, we learn clearly from St. John, where we have a vision of the Lamb, ‘ having seven horns and seven eyes ; which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth ’² ; and those spirits he terms ‘ angels.’

Bishop Bull.

AN Angel walks righteously in his own order of perfection ; he is holy because God is Holy, and merciful in homage to the Divine Mercy. Loving the truth, hating a lie, he speaks uprightly whatever word is put in his mouth, neither calling bitter sweet nor sweet bitter. Self weighs naught with him, the equity of God’s perfect Will absorbing his will and fulfilling his pleasure. He delights not in destruction for destruction’s sake, yet as a step in the equal ways of God he delights in it ; nor does he investigate evil for evil’s sake, but rather as an agent towards the bringing in of Everlasting Righteousness. Thus he dwelleth on high. And thus by grace we may dwell below while we await the call to go up higher.

Nerve us with patience, Lord, to toil or rest,
 Toiling at rest on our allotted level ;
 Unsnared, unscared by world or flesh or devil,
 Fulfilling the good Will of Thy behest ;

¹ Zech. iv. 2, 10.

² Rev. v. 6.

Not careful here to hoard, not here to revel ;
But waiting for our treasure and our zest
Beyond the fading splendour of the west,
 Beyond this death-struck life and deathlier evil.
Not with the sparrow building here a house :
 But with the swallow tabernacling so
 As still to poise alert to rise and go
On eager wings with wing-outspeeding wills
Beyond earth's gourds and past her almond
 boughs,
Past utmost bound of the everlasting hills.

Christina Rossetti.

CHAPTER IX

The Conception of Angels as Represented in Art

What if earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought ?

MILTON

And in this twofold sphere, the twofold man
(For still the artist is intensely a man)
Holds firm by the natural, to reach
The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still
The type with mortal vision, to pierce through
With eyes immortal, to the anti-type
Some call the ideal,—better called the real,
And certain to be called so presently
When things shall have their names.

E. B. BROWNING.



Pinturicchio

AN ANGEL.

(Pinturicchio.)

The Conception of Angels as Represented in Art

To consider the bearing of Art or Literature upon the subject of the Holy Angels, is to pass on, for a while, from the revelation of God, to take account of the issue of that revelation in the world around. It is to pause, and look back down the ages, and see how far the knowledge God has given him has affected man : to what extent he has made the truths revealed to him, his own. It is to watch the gradual development of an idea, as the early conceptions have been modified or elaborated, and advancing civilisation has given fresh power of expression. It is to stand, too, at the centre of a great and ever-widening circle of influence : one which has stood the test of time and comes to us with all the power of a voice from the past, enriched with all the treasures of an age of simpler faith. An influence which has met and uplifted thousands of God's creatures, 'of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.' An influence which, in the dark ages of the history of Christendom, alone stood for purity and truth ; keeping, as it were, a

little space of clear, free air, amid the blinding, stifling fumes of lust, and violence, and sensuality. Literature and Art have gone hand in hand. Art, at one time, seems but the shadow cast by the bright light of Literature. At another, she rises above all that has gone before: kindling new fire among the smouldering embers of a dying tradition; clothing an old thought in a new garment; showing the other side of a loved truth which looked to have one aspect only; and sweeping away the dust of error and superstition, reveals again the narrow, almost obliterated pathway of Divine Light. Literature and Art are, to a great extent, mutually dependent; but their sphere of influence is very different. The door of Literature can only be unlocked by the key of scholarship. Art has a message for all, and her voice is oftentimes more clearly heard when the power of criticism is absent; the deep signification may be lost if undue heed be paid to her tones and her accents. Nature has shown her nothing new; but new beauty in that which was well known: new riches where none thought of looking for them. And she takes them all and treasures them—not for herself; but that the Divinely-implanted longing of the human soul to live above the present and the material, may have somewhat to rest upon; for she recognises no line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural: both are alike wonderful, incompre-

hensible: she does not attempt to explain either; nay, rather, by dwelling upon them she only increases and intensifies their mystery. The bodily sense which presents to the mind the mysteries of nature, and the spiritual perception which sees 'God in every common bush,' and finds nothing *unnatural* in the world of spirits, are both alike the gift of God,—the one a stepping-stone to the other. Both, it may be, catch only a glimpse of the hem of the garment of God, but it is this that gives such force and power to the voice of Art, and awakens a corresponding throb in the hearts of all to whom she speaks, and quickens every pulse as the overwhelming, though, perhaps, unconscious conviction is brought home, that man is something less than he took himself to be and that God is something more.

'The work of Fine Art is to minister to the spiritual life of those who seek it.' In one sense Art has a higher mission than Nature. Art is the interpretation of Nature. 'Nature with humanity superadded, and thus bringing with it the human idea of Nature's beauty, it helps us by the power of an unconscious sympathy to perceive what otherwise would have passed unheeded. . . . The spirit of beauty, whether enshrined in material or moral form, the beauty of strength or weakness, the beauty of reality or idea, all come from the same source whence our own nature itself has come, and has

been endowed with power to feel and to comprehend it.’¹ Imagination,—the power by which beauty, whether of form and colour, or of thought and idea, is recognised and acknowledged—caught up into the very being, is no wayward, irresponsible possession; but a God-given faculty dominated by faith and reason; and provided faith and reason are preserved true and clear, the spiritual perception of the imagination is unerring; and only in so far as Art is true to this ideal has she any lasting influence. The true function of the imagination is not a *creative* but a *responsive* one. It is the power of grasping, unravelling, laying hold of, what is; rather than the disposition to dwell upon what is not. ‘Its work is no vague dream. . . . When not marred and darkened by an evil will, it is a Divinely-constituted means of spiritual intelligence, illuminating mortal sense from the fountain of immortality. . . . Imagination is that great faculty by which the soul ascends to the contemplation of the Divine Nature, and listens to that Voice which is in the stillness of the universe.’² Possessed in degree by all; it is the individual refutation of the trend of modern scepticism that ‘the things which are not seen’—are not.

The first trace of the representation of Angels in Art comes from the history of the setting up of the

¹ T. Gambier Parry: *Ministry of Fine Art*, p. 35. ² *Ib.* p. 44.

Tabernacle in the wilderness.¹ Two small Cherubim of beaten gold were placed one at either end of the mercy seat which rested upon the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Cherubim were also interwoven or embroidered upon the curtains and veil of the Tabernacle. Josephus says, 'No one can tell or even conjecture of what shape the cherubim were.' The Cherubim, both of the Tabernacle and of Solomon's Temple, had apparently two wings; and those of Solomon's Temple 'stood on their feet.' Nothing more is known. It may be they corresponded with similar conceptions of other races, and that the idea was suggested by the winged bulls of Assyria, or the winged figures of Egypt or the countries adjoining Palestine; although it seems scarcely possible, considering the prominent place the cherubim held in Hebrew worship, that they were borrowed from a heathen source. Also, the theory that they belonged to a national idea and survived as one of the traces of a Hebrew mythology, based on the ground that they were designed and made without any conscious infringement of the second commandment, seems inadequate; for, even if the commandment bore, at that time, the literal interpretation which was afterwards placed upon it, the cherubim, of whatever form, were a likeness of things 'in heaven above.' Prevailing opinion favours the view that they were human figures with

¹ Exodus xxv. 18.

the addition of wings, and that the human form was consecrated thus early to the representation of angels in Art. But the tradition is lost. Solomon's Temple contained in the Holy of Holies two colossal Cherubim, probably copied from those of the Tabernacle, with the difference of material, size, and change of position. The Cherubim over the ark are described in an attitude of reverent adoration. Solomon's Cherubim stood with outstretched wings apparently facing the entrance. 'Possibly the change of attitude of the cherubim in the Temple denoted a change of idea characteristic of Solomon and his age; the old attitude is clearly that of worship of God: the new, rather of manifestation of His glory to man.'¹ Carved figures of Cherubim were also introduced into the decoration of the walls of the Temple. The Hebrews were never great in Art. The artistic work of the Tabernacle was designed and carried out by Hebrew craftsmen: but that was early in the nation's history; before the skill acquired by the Egyptian training and influence had passed away. Later, King Solomon employed foreigners for the Temple work, for there were none among them that could 'skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.'²

The command for the execution of the Cherubim of the Tabernacle sets forth the whole purpose of

¹ Right Rev. Alfred Barry, in Bishop Ellicott's *Commentary*.

² 1 Kings v. 6.

God for Art, and has a manifest bearing upon the subject of Art and Worship. It is as though—in view of the interpretation which the narrow literalism of the days of Hebrew degeneracy placed upon the second commandment, until it passed into an absolute prohibition of the arts of painting and sculpture—God stretched forth His Hand and lifted up His Voice ; that in the almost solitary record of Hebrew figure-work men might learn the mind of God ; and that the words ‘ Thou shalt make two cherubim ’ might echo down the ages as the Divine authority for the representation of angels in Art. Further, Art was the means chosen by God to teach the truths of the invisible world. The cherubim were unseen as that world itself, except by the High Priest, on rare occasions. The ark signified the very Presence of God. The Cherubim—it is the thought of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews—contributed to the Glory of God. The Israelite could picture his God dwelling between the Cherubim ; and how often, in his undisciplined life, must the thought of the Cherubim in perpetual adoration have awakened, or recalled him to a sense of what true worship and reverence are. This was the first office of Art in the Church of God, and Art was thereby sanctified for ever to the service of God. Again, the artists or craftsmen chosen for the work are described as men whom God had ‘ filled with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and

in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,'¹ in striking contrast to the thought and language of the present day. It is a plea for special fitness for any work destined to be used to the glory of God in the service of His Church. It is a plea for a place for Art in religion; for the recognition of the true relationship between Religion and Art. An English resident in Japan writes: 'The church is an extremely ugly building, at best. Seeing how magnificent the Japanese temples are, and the infinite amount of care which goes to the construction of the humblest of them, I hardly wonder that it is found a hard thing to convert the Japanese people to our own faith.' The Japanese is not at fault in his conception of God as a God of beauty.

To pass on to the Christian era. The early heresies of the Church, and the prevalence of angel-worship in the early days of Christianity, led to the prohibition of the representation of angels in Art: even the naming of angels was forbidden: hence the first three centuries and the early part of the fourth have left no trace of any figure which might be taken to represent an angel. It was maintained at the Second Council of Nicaea 'that angels have the human form and may be so represented,'² and in the earliest examples of Christian Art the human form is used. The earliest figures of angels

¹ Ex. xxxi. 3.

² Mrs. Jameson: *Sacred and Legendary Art*.

believed to exist are those of the mosaics in the Church of Santa Agata at Ravenna (A.D. 400). The figures are winged, of colossal proportions, and are represented with kingly attributes. In early Art the angels were draped : at first in the classical tunic and pallium, and later in the alb and stole ; or as princes in embroidered robes and jewelled crowns ; and this idea prevailed down to the end of the tenth century. From the eleventh to the thirteenth century the Byzantine influence everywhere predominated, and the figures were conventional and richly draped. The fourteenth century was the dawn of the glorious day of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries ; and the three hundred years—from the time of Giotto in the fourteenth century to the time of Guido and Rembrandt in the seventeenth—have left us angels which, for greatness of conception and execution, have never been equalled in any age, and are never likely to be surpassed.

It is impossible in a single chapter to give anything in the nature of a critical survey of this particular branch of Art : such an attempt could hardly rise above the level of an annotated catalogue. It is enough to refer to Mrs. Jameson's 'Sacred and Legendary Art,' where the whole subject is dealt with by one who was in a position to give an opinion. We all have our friends among these masterpieces. Probably every thought sug-

gested in these pages recalls to the mind some representation in Art: seen long ago, it may be, and well-nigh forgotten, but living yet; and Art is doing her silent work through the agency of the memory. And it is among the names of Correggio, Michael Angelo, and Botticelli; of Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi; of Raphael, and Titian, and many others, that the memory dwells: for, it is worthy of note, the work to which we turn for the testimony of Art to the reality of the angel-world is the work, and the best work, of the great masters in Art. Religious Art, properly so called, is no side-issue of Art. The history of the development of Art along the line of revelation is the history of all that is best in Art; a witness to the truth that here, as in all else, man is made for God, and can find no rest until he rest in Him. Pictorial Art, as we know it, is the outcome of the revival of the Fine Arts in the early middle ages, when 'the first, and for several ages the only, impress they received was that of the religious spirit of the time. Painting, sculpture, music, and architecture, as they emerged one after another from the "formless void," were pressed into the service of the Church. . . . The first great object to which reviving Art was destined, was to render the Christian places of worship a theatre of instruction and improvement for the people.'¹ The artists of the early middle ages worked upon the

Mrs. Jameson: *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

walls of their churches with the primary object of setting forth an idea. The subject was paramount ; artistic effect little considered. They 'worked for earnestness of expression rather than for power of effect. Their accessories, chosen to aid the composition or to explain the subject, were few, and those commonly rather symbolical than real. . . . It was the representation rather of the artist's *thought* than the attempt to *realise* a scene. The design sufficed to illustrate the story. It was hampered by no detail. Its motive and sentiment were impressed upon it—and then the imaginations of the multitude were left to wander about it unimpeded and undisturbed. Such was the work of those times.'¹

The artists of the early middle ages worked because they had something to say, and they said it in a way 'easy to be understood.' The importance of this point cannot be over-estimated :—

(1) In determining the historical value of Art as a commentary upon Holy Writ and as an index to the faith and traditions of the Church ; and, in this case, the value of the testimony borne by Art to the universal belief of the Church in the office and work of the angels.

(2) In considering this period as the parent of the Renaissance, the great age of Expression, and cultivated Art.

¹ T. Gambier Parry : *Ministry of Fine Art*, p. 324.

And there is no theme that Christian Art, whether of the Renaissance or of earlier times, has better loved to dwell upon than that of the ministry of the Holy Angels. The challenge to the imagination given in the Bible record has received a mighty and a fearless answer at the hand of Art. She tells of angels around the very throne of God, occupied in ceaseless worship of God. Dante has given expression to this thought in his beautiful 'Our Father' of the faithful departed:—

'Of their will, the Angels unto Thee
Tender meet sacrifice, circling Thy Throne
With loud hosannas.'¹

Sometimes the form is human, winged. At others, as in representations of the Glorification of the Holy Trinity, of our Lord, or of the Blessed Virgin, when hierarchies of angels are shown in circles round; the Seraphim and Cherubim—those nearest to God—are depicted under the figure of a head only; with two, four, or six wings, 'intended to shadow forth to human comprehension a pure spirit, glowing with love and intelligence, in which all that is bodily is put away, and only the head, the seat of soul, and wings the attribute of spirit, retained.' And as we mark their distinguishing colours, the flaming red of the Seraphim—nearest to God, and the more sober blue of the Cherubim, we

¹ *Purg.* canto xi.

hear the voice of Art whisper, 'To love is greater than to know.' Or the scene is changed to the Altar Throne below ; and in the centre of the Worship of the ' whole Church ' the Angels kneel in reverent adoration of the Lamb of God : and we realise more fully the exceeding blessedness of that common worship ' with Angels and Archangels.' Or the imagination moves along the Gospel story ; and the reverent awe of the Angel of the Annunciation calls upon us to pause and ponder the mystery of the Incarnation. The rejoicing Angels of the Nativity bid us rejoice too. The Angel of Gethsemane tells of support in the hour of trial ; and, as he bears the cup of sorrow and the symbols of the Passion, with the hand raised in benediction, suggests the thought that the angels know to the full the blessedness of suffering ; that, maybe, they look upon our sorrows beforehand as we look upon them after, and so are enabled to be God's ministers still, for good, or seeming ill. Or we are led between the lines of Holy Scripture, and the Angels of the Baptism are in lowly attendance upon the beloved Son of God—kneeling, where others stand ; and the Angels of the Crucifixion are represented in eager anxiety to make reparation for the sin of man ; to supply what is wanting in the love of man. Or the scene changes again to the present ministry of the holy angels, and we find ourselves watched over and guarded here below ; presented before the Throne by the

hand of the holy angels hereafter. Such is the testimony of Art. The angels of Michael Angelo and Raphael, of Angelico and Filippo Lippi, are real beings; engaged in a definite work of worship or service: in contradistinction to much of the work of the present day, where an angel is so often introduced solely for the decorative value of a pair of wings. Ruskin says, speaking of early Christian Art: 'There is a certain confidence in the way in which angels trust to their wings, very characteristic of an age of bold and simple conception. Modern science has taught us that a wing cannot anatomically be joined to a shoulder, and in proportion as painters approach more and more to the scientific as distinguished from the contemplative state of mind, they put the wings of their angels on more timidly, and dwell with greater emphasis upon the human form with less upon the wings, until these last become a species of decorative appendage, a mere *sign* of an angel.'¹ This may be; but the root lies somewhat deeper. Modern work does not carry the same conviction because the same conviction is not behind it. Of the great masters of the Renaissance, Michael Angelo, Botticelli, and Fra Bartolommeo at least, were inspired by the time, and worked under the influence of Savonarola. The Art of the early middle ages emanated from the cloister, whither all learning and Art had been

¹ Quoted by Mrs. Jameson.

driven. It was saturated with religious feeling. Sincerity of thought rather than power of expression was its distinguishing feature ; and as it advanced, and the laws of Art were unfolded, and the glories of Nature laid bare, the love of truth was not lost, but intensified, and expanded, until it embraced both Nature and Art ; and this adherence to the truth of Nature, and submission to the laws of Art, is the secret of the work of the Renaissance. The Impressionist school, great as it is in the promotion of unconventional freedom of expression, has its dangers in the sacrifice of truth to effect. Art is learning to serve herself ; not God. The laws of Nature and the laws of Art are the laws of God, the Great Art Critic ; Whose own works defy criticism and challenge comprehension.

Faith was the mainspring of the Art of earlier times. It is sufficiently 'of man,' and produced so manifestly under the influence of the age which called it forth, as to warrant our rejection of all that is superstitious. But all that is 'of God' will live, as an instrument in the Hand of God ; if not in substance, yet in influence and in memory ; it may be—who can tell ? as long even as the Word of God ;—for ever.

And this testimony of Art is the return of Art to God. It is something, in an age of scepticism and infidelity, to find, in the Art of past ages, such unmistakeable witness borne to the reality of the

unseen world. It is something to number the 'Annunciation' of Rossetti amongst the nation's treasures of contemporary Art; to see in the work of Burne-Jones, G. F. Watts, and F. Shields, an indication that Art is still not wholly unmindful of 'the deep things of God'; and to remember, as we call to mind work which bears no such honoured name, that there are others, away from the great high-road of Art, working with no less earnestness of purpose, bearing a witness not less true. Lord! for our forgetfulness, our unbelief, our carelessness; accept this our remembrance and use it to Thy glory.

'The foundation of all Fine Art lies in that *relationship* which exists between the things of material and the things of spirit; and the degree of its perception and the power of its use is the gauge of all Art's genius. By force of that relationship Fine Art testifies to that Divine life which underlies the whole sphere of man's mortal state. She testifies to the utter inadequacy of all material things to measure the range, or to satisfy the aspirations, of that which is itself illimitable—the human soul. She is herself that soul's interpreter. Her greatest works are but symbols. She is conscious of her own feebleness, and of those impenetrable clouds which dim her mortal sight. But she is conscious also of that light which shines beyond those clouds; and by an impulse of desire and faith

she stretches out her arms to the heavens, and, silent, she binds around her lovely brow this motto :
 “ What is not seen is eternal.”¹

E. M. H.

Is music the inarticulate
 Speech of the Angels on earth ?
 Or the voice of the undiscovered
 Bringing great truths to the birth ?

F. W. FABER.

LET us take an instance of an outward and earthly form, or economy, under which great wonders unknown seem to be typified ; I mean musical sounds, as they are exhibited most perfectly in instrumental harmony. There are seven notes in the scale ; make them fourteen ; yet what a slender outfit for so vast an enterprise ! What science brings so much out of so little ? Out of what poor elements does some great master in it create his new world ! Shall we say that all this exuberant inventiveness is a mere ingenuity or trick of art, like some game or fashion of the day, without reality, without meaning ? We may do so ; and then, perhaps, we shall also account the science of theology to be a matter of words ; yet as there is a divinity in the theology of the Church, which those who feel cannot communicate, so is there also in the wonderful creation of sublimity and beauty of which I am speaking.

To many men the very names which the science

¹ T. Gambier Parry : *Ministry of Fine Art*, p. 362.

employs are utterly incomprehensible. To speak of an idea or a subject seems to be fanciful or trifling, and of the views which it opens upon us to be childish extravagance ; yet is it possible that the inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich, so simple, so intricate, yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound, which is gone and perishes ?

Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself ? It is not so ; it cannot be. No ; they have escaped from some higher sphere ; they are outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound ; they are echoes from our Home ; they are the voice of Angels or the Magnificat of Saints, or the living laws of Divine Governance, or the Divine Attributes ; something are they beside themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter,—though mortal man, and he perhaps not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the gift of eliciting them.

J. H. Newman (1801–1890).

THE angels are the Choristers of Heaven. Theirs is the privilege to sound that hymn of praise which goes up from this boundless and harmonious universe of suns, and stars, and worlds, and rejoicing

creatures, towards the God who created them :
theirs is the music of the spheres—

‘ They sing, and singing in their glory move ’ ;
they tune divine instruments, named after those of
earth’s harmonies—

‘ The harp, the solemn pipe
And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,
All sounds on fret by string or golden wire,
. And with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle His throne rejoicing.’¹

Mrs. Jameson.

SONG OF AN ANGEL.

AT noon a shower had fallen, and the clime
Breathed sweetly, and upon a cloud there lay
One more sublime in beauty than the Day,
Or all the sons of Time.

A gold harp had he, and was singing there
Songs that I yearned to hear ; a glory shone
Of rosy twilights on his cheeks—a zone
Of amaranth on his hair.

He sang of joys to which the earthly heart
Hath never beat ; he sang of deathless Youth,
And by the throne of Love, Beauty and Truth
Meeting, no more to part ;

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Bk. vii. 595.

He sang lost Hope, faint Faith, and vain Desire
Crown'd there ; great works that on the earth
began,

Accomplish'd ; towers impregnable to man
Scaled with the speed of fire ;

Of Power and Life, and wingéd Victory

He sang—of bridges strown twixt star and star—
And hosts all arm'd in light for bloodless war
Pass and repass on high ;

Lo ! in the pauses of his jubilant voice

He leans to listen : answers from the spheres,
And mighty pæans thundering he hears
Down the empyreal skies.

Then suddenly he ceased—and seem'd to rest

His goodly-fashioned arm upon a slope
Of that fair cloud, and with soft eyes of hope
He pointed towards the West ;

And shed on me a smile of beams, that told

Of a bright World beyond the thunder-piles,
With blessed fields, and hills, and happy isles,
And citadels of gold.

Frederick Tennyson.

CHAPTER X

Visitants and Messengers

These with power were graced
To execute on earth the will of Heaven.

DANTE.

As Angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep :
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes
And into glory peep.

HENRY VAUGHAN.

ARE these the tracks of some unearthly Friend,
His foot-prints, and his vesture-skirts of light,
Who, as I talk with men, conforms aright
Their sympathetic words, or deeds that blend
With my hid thought ;—or stoops him to attend
My doubtful-pleading grief ;—or blunts the might
Of ill I see not ;—or in dreams of night
Figures the scope in which what is will end ?
Were I Christ's own, then fitly might I call
That vision real ; for to the thoughtful mind
That walks with Him, He half unveils His Face ;
But when on common men such shadows fall,
These dare not make their own the gifts they find,
Yet, not all hopeless, eye His boundless grace.

J. H. Newman.

Visitants and Messengers

THE Christian Religion rests upon truths which are clearly revealed by God, and by us are 'most surely believed.' But outside this central area of certainty there lies a region more or less illuminated, in which we are free to wander in reverent speculation. It is well that such freedom should be allowed, for if the whole man should be consecrated to God, there must be room for the reverent use of the imagination, which is no mean function of the reason. When we think of the awe which is inspired by the vast possibilities of nature; when we remember how the discovery of the New World evoked a fresh feeling of wonder in the literature of the sixteenth century: we shall not despise the advantage to religion of realms half realised and truths only in part apprehended.

The suggestions which will be made in this chapter do not profess to belong to the class of certainties, but rather claim a place among more or less probable speculations. They are not proposed as sure foundations of our faith, but only as ornaments of its fabric, which seem indeed to

be in harmony with its structure, but which may be cast away without prejudice to the stability of the building ; but they would not be proposed at all save in the conviction that they are consistent with the affirmations of the Christian Faith.

With regard to the existence of Angels, it can hardly be questioned by any one who believes in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and especially the words and acts of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, who claims conversance with the world of spirits, bears testimony to the existence of intelligent creatures of an order different from our own. Some of these beings are glad and faithful ministers of God ; others, though rebellious and malignant, yet render reluctant submission to His will. They are alike ‘angels’—messengers who do His pleasure. To doubt their existence is to question the knowledge of the Incarnate Word, or, worse, His veracity.

But as to the nature of the angels and their mode of operation we have no such sure guidance, and must be led by suggestions in the Bible, by the experience of the saints, and by reasonable probability.

There are not a few passages in Holy Scripture which seem to identify angels with the forces of nature. One such passage may be quoted from both Testaments : ‘He maketh His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.’¹ In consonance

¹ Ps. civ. 4 ; Heb. i. 7.

with this saying is the experience of an officer in the Confederate Army in America, who was left for dead on the field of battle, and there saw a vision of our Lord in glory ; and every ray of light that proceeded from Him terminated in an angelic face. The world, he learned, is no fatalistic machine, but is pervaded with the Life of Christ ; and that Life is ministered by holy angels. There seems to be no adequate reason why we should not accept this identification of natural forces with holy angels. For, in the first place, it is certain from many declarations of Holy Scripture that the angels are His ministers to men ; and it is also certain that the forces of nature minister to us, sunlight and rain giving us bread from Him, and storms clearing the air from pestilence. But if forces and angels alike minister to us on earth, there is a probability that the two classes of ministrants are allied. If angels guide the wanderer, why should not the pole-star and the magnetic current be instruments by which they work ? If angels provide food for us, as for our Saviour in the wilderness, why should not the sunshine and the rain which bring forth the corn be the means which they employ ?

And it may perhaps seem reasonable that the ministrants of the personal God should themselves be not merely *things* but persons ; for a thing is a very imperfect representative of a person's mind.

It is for this reason that we feel that we gain a much fuller knowledge of a man's character from an interview with him, or with a friend who knew him well, than we can get from his books or his pictures. Now, we can be quite sure that, unless He is hindered by our unfitness to receive a perfect revelation, God will use the best means to disclose Himself. It is so in the supreme case of the Incarnation, where God gives a revelation of Himself far surpassing books and laws in the Person of His Son ; and it is by the personal Spirit that He bestows on men His life. Again, by personal agents He ministers to our bodily and spiritual wants, using the farmer to supply us with food, the physician to heal our diseases, the priest to nourish us with the word and the sacraments. It cannot be affirmed that He never ministers to us by impersonal instruments ; but there is a sort of probability that the ministry of winds and fires is personal.

Once more, it is surely not without significance that some of our greatest physicists find it convenient to speak of the forces of nature as '*daemons*,' using the term not with its modern connotation of malice but in its original Greek sense of spiritual powers. It would be unfair to claim these thinkers as definitely asserting the angelic character of natural forces, but as it is reasonable to suppose that Personal Reason lies at the source of all exist-

ences, so it is not unlikely that reasoning persons underlie all operations of force.

And people who may be ignorant of science bear a similar witness. We are all of us familiar with what has been called the 'pathetic fallacy' that there is a sort of sympathy between man and nature—that when we are glad the sunshine rejoices with us, and that a pitying rain falls on the grave where we have laid our dear ones. Is this a fallacy after all? Is there not really in nature something which answers sympathetically to our emotions? It is easy to reply that this apparent sympathy is far from universal, for rain often falls upon the wedding and sunshine on the grave. But we do not doubt the reality of human sympathy because we often fail to find it; and the 'friendship of nature' is so common an experience that the failure of it here and there does not suffice to show that it exists nowhere. But sympathy is a community between persons; and if the common feeling of the sympathy of nature is not altogether illusory, it indicates that nature is in some sort personal.

But if we ascribe personality to nature, or rather to angels who animate it, it is well to remember how little we know the real meaning of personality, and how little cause we have for assuming that it means precisely the same thing when ascribed to men and to angels. Though we are for a while made lower than the angels, our capacity is higher

than theirs ; for while they are ever God's servants, we are His sons by reason of our union with His Son, who partakes of our humanity and whose throne we are to share. Angels were supposed by some Jewish theologians 'to live only as they ministered. . . . The angels are renewed every morning, and after they have praised God they return to the stream of fire out of which they came.'¹ If this view be true, then the holy angels may be perpetuated by the persistence of their service ; and the like may be the case with the fallen angels ; for even they, though against their will, serve God by trying and perfecting His saints ; and when this task has been accomplished, and the saints need no more trial, then the Accuser and his servants may cease to exist. We shall do well, then, to remember that the personality of the angels may be in some ways different from our own ; and in using the phrase to assume no further meaning for it than that they are beings endowed with consciousness and volition.

With these thoughts in mind let us ask what was the gladness of the angels of which we read in the Epic of Trial, 'when the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.' Was their joy merely that of spectators of a glorious work, or were they themselves partakers in it ? Consider the pleasure which we take in a work of creative art. It is, at first, delight in seeing the

¹ Westcott on Heb. i. 7.

achievement of a single master-mind ; but we soon become conscious of the pleasure of the enlargement of our own faculties. We can see now what at first Giotto only saw. May it not be conceived that the angels' joy in the creative work of God involves the joy of the realisation of their own capacity, so that their song of praise is the expression of their own being fulfilled in the planet which they guide, in the wind which they sway ?

But a grave difficulty meets those who are disposed to associate the forces of nature with the angels in the apparently unmoral action of natural forces. Nature seems to care nothing about right and wrong. Naboth's vineyard does not cease to be fruitful when it passes into the hands of Ahab ; the earthquake sweeps away the just and the unjust alike ; the saint suffers the agony of disease no less than the sinner. Can it be supposed that indiscriminate benefits and disasters are ministered by holy angels ?

The simplest solution of the difficulty is perhaps to be found in the existence of apostate angels, enemies of God and man, who in spite of their fall retain for the time something of their original dominion, and may be expected to exercise their power unjustly and maliciously. Of the existence of evil spirits there can be no doubt among those who accept the testimony of Holy Scripture ; nor can we forget that our Lord ' rebuked ' the stormy

winds and waves—a phrase which seems to imply that they were not only sentient but malignant. We may remember the story of St. Gall, who, crossing the Lake of Constance in company with St. Columbanus, heard the demons of tempest plot how they might hinder the messengers of the Cross. And our fathers, in the consecration of bells, associated the breaking of storms with the expulsion of evil spirits.

The difficulty which we are considering does not arise exclusively in view of the conception of angels which we have suggested. It lies in the way of all theism, which is asked how the apparently unmoral course of nature is to be reconciled with faith in a loving and mighty God. It is indeed used by our Lord to illustrate the goodness of His Father, who ‘maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’¹ It is no part of our present task to consider the question as a whole; but it may be well to suggest that not every creature of God is intended to express all His character. It may well be that, reserving the declaration of His righteousness for the supreme revelation of His Son, He has made natural forces, and the holy angels whom we regard as ruling them, to express not His justice but His power only. Further, if it is not inconsistent with His justice to chastise those

¹ Matt. v. 45.

whom He loves, it is not necessarily inconsistent with the goodness of the holy angels to convey that chastisement. A God-fearing statesman or general may find himself bound to wage war, though he knows that the miseries of war fall upon guilty and innocent alike ; and if such an awful charge is seldom laid upon men, it may be because our knowledge of the purpose of God is imperfect, and also because our habit of obedience is not sufficient to enable us to carry out God's severity without mingling with it some private feelings of wrath. But a holy Angel may well be supposed to carry out his terrible task with a fuller knowledge of God's merciful purpose and a more perfect and unselfish obedience to His command. He may have the same joy in his awful task which a humane surgeon has in some fearful operation, which he loathes as a sympathetic man, yet gladly performs because in doing so he is God's minister for good.

‘ What think His angels, as they go and come
On some prodigious errand duly bent,
Whirled in the howling wind, or veiled in cloud.
Or in the shadowy columns of the rain,
To battle with the careless mountain peak,
Or rend the forest, or intently charged
With storm or ruin for some innocent vale ?
Care they for human grief, for lifelong woes ?
And would they stay the hand that strikes the
blow ?
Wipe if they could the bitter tears away ?

And do they hide the head and steel the eye,
Too pure to question those permitted wrongs,
Too pitiful to see them and be glad ? ' ¹

Nay ; ' the righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance,' when he knows that it is but the ' strange work ' of infinite and victorious Love.

It remains for us to consider what effect this association of the forces of nature and angelic ministries, if it be accepted, will have upon our view of the world and of life. If persons are more noble than things, so that the weak man is more noble than the universe which crushes him, because he knows that he is crushed, and the universe knows nothing : then the universe itself is raised in nobility if it is regarded as intelligent. The Christian knows, indeed, in any case that personality and not mere force lies at the root of the universe, for it is created through the Word of God, and ' that which hath been made is life in Him ' ; but that Word is more fully expressed by the personal agency of angels than by any mere mechanism of dead forces. Thus the *Benedicite* acquires a richer meaning if it invites to the praise of God not inanimate nature, which at the best could only yield a homage inferior to that of the meanest of sentient beings, but Angels, whose more worthy adoration is a model and incentive to our own. Thus in a very wonderful

¹ A. C. Benson : *In the Iron Cage*.

manner heaven and earth are full of the glory of the Lord. And if at times we tremble at the thought that we puny creatures lie at the disposal of forces far more potent than ourselves, the fear is soothed when we consider that these forces express the wise minds and the tender hearts of angels who consciously and voluntarily minister to us the care of our Creator. We find alike rest and exhilaration in taking to ourselves the words of the mystic painter: 'When the sun rises do you not see a disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea? Oh no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."' ¹

H. H. J.

THE Festival of St. Michael and All Angels furnishes an opportunity for bringing out the idea of the interpenetration of human life by life of another order. And if it be true (and who has not felt it?) that 'the world'—the world of sense—'is too much with us,' then a remedy is here offered for our use. The reserve and the revelations of Scripture are equally eloquent. I will notice one point only, which seems to be practically overlooked.

We commonly limit our notion of angelic service to personal ministration. No doubt Scripture dwells specially on this kind of office; but it indicates

¹ W. Blake.

yet more, a ministration of Angels in nature, which brings both them and the world closer to men.

Perhaps one effect of the growing clearness with which we apprehend the laws of physical phenomena is to bring out into prominence the thought of the powers which work according to them. The sense of action by law places the agent very near to us. 'I can see,' writes one who was himself a distinguished physiologist, 'nothing in all nature but the loving acts of spiritual beings.' However strange the conception may be, it contains, I believe, truths which we have not yet mastered. And in this respect we commonly embarrass ourselves by mentally presenting all action under the forms of human action. Spirit, it is obvious, may act in other ways ; and our festival of the heavenly order remains to help us little by little to apprehend in this larger sense the revelation of the Communion of Saints.

Bishop Westcott (1825-1901).

ALL God's Angels come to us disguised—
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,
One after other lift their frowning masks,
And we behold the seraph face beneath
All radiant with the glory and the calm
Of having looked upon the front of God.

J. R. Lowell.

EVERY person, and everything through which God brings before men His commands, or His warnings, or His promises, becomes, so far, His angel or messenger. It is for us to follow as a

voice from heaven—as an Angel of the Lord—every suggestion that would lead us to Him, every warning that would keep us in His paths.

Ask yourself, each one who sincerely desires Divine help and guidance, whether you may not, like some holy men of old, have ‘received angels unawares’; whether you may not have been visited—though not by a divine messenger in bodily shape—yet by some thought or feeling which, in some hour of trial, has led you—or *would* have led you—out of evil company, or some other such danger, even as the angels led Lot out of the city doomed to destruction? May not some temporal loss, or mortification, or alarm, have occurred opportunely to shake off from you the chain of over-devotedness to worldly objects, or to rouse you from indolent carelessness, like the angel which visited Peter in the prison, bidding him arise and gird himself and causing his fetters to fall off, and the prison gates to open? Or may not the ordinary courses of events—that is, of God’s Providence, which makes ‘all things work together for good to them that love Him’—have sometimes introduced you to some book, or some teacher, fitted to supply to you just the instruction or the consolation you were most in need of: even as the angel brought Cornelius to the knowledge of Peter, who should ‘tell him what he ought to do’? In these you may have been receiving angelic visits unawares; since every person or thing through which God communicates with us is, so far, His angel or messenger.

Archbishop Whately (1787–1863).

GOD keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream ;
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
Like swans adown a stream.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty ?—exaltations
From His great glory ?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be ?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
Beyond our peace and passions ?

Things nameless ! which, in passing so,
We stroke as with a subtle grace ;
We say, ' Who passes ? '—they are dumb ;
We cannot see them go or come :
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown ;
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own !

And sometimes, horror chills our blood,
 To be so near such mystic Things,
 And we wrap round us for defence
 Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God
 Stand hidden in their wings.

And sometimes, through Life's heavy swound
 We grope for them, with strangled breath
 We stretch our hands abroad, and try
 To reach them in our agony ;
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
 Soon large enough for death.

*E. B. Browning.*¹

¹ *Human Life's Mystery.*

CHAPTER XI

Guardian Angels

God's witnesses, a glorious host,
Compass him daily like a cloud.

J. KEBLE.



THE ANGEL GUARDIAN.

(F. Shields.)

AND if it be that they behold
His Face in some serener air,
While those they guard, in want and cold
And hunger, wail and shiver there ;—
How can they care, when thus they stand
In that sweet peace, that golden dream,
For yon dull eye, yon feeble hand,
For hearts that ache, for tears that stream ?
They wonder that so frail a thing
Can still resist the awful Will ;
They marvel, even as they sing,
That souls are disobedient still :
They would not change ; and yet they guess
That still some loftier purpose waits
For sin-stained spirits, so they press
Right onward to the shining gates.
And thus, with rapt and wistful grace,
With hand outstretched and wondering eye,
They tend the humbler, nobler race,
A little lower, yet more high !

Arthur Christopher Benson.

Guardian Angels

He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.—Ps. xci. 11.

My oldest friend, mine from the hour
When first I drew my breath ;
My faithful friend, that shall be mine,
Unfailing, till my death ;

Thou hast been ever at my side ;
My Maker to thy trust
Consigned my soul, what time He formed
The infant child of dust.

J. H. NEWMAN.

THE contemplation of the Holy Angels has a fascination all its own. There is something extraordinarily attractive in the thought of 'those blessed servants of God who have never tasted of sin ; who are among us, though unseen, ever serving God joyfully on earth as well as in heaven ; who minister, through their Maker's condescending Will, to the redeemed in Christ, the heirs of salvation.' To every Christian but the most prosaic it is a joy to remember that the whole universe is, after all, full of created beings free from sin, whose happiness it is to praise God continually and serve Him

willingly ; and that ‘because of the angels’¹ it is not true that ‘full many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air.’ All this and much else—our relation to the Saints and Blessed Dead, for instance—belongs to the poetry of religion ; and poetry is pathetic, uplifting, edifying. Our knowledge of the angels is but dim and shadowy at best, for in this life there are the scales of human limitation upon our eyes, and they impede our vision. ‘The hosts of God encamp around the dwellings of the just ;’ but, like the servant of Elisha before his master prayed for him, our eyes are holden, and we see them not. Yet this at least is clear about the being of angels : that they are spiritual substances, or (to quote from St. John Damascene²) ‘intellectual beings, ever in motion, possessing free-will, incorporeal, ministering to God, having an immortal nature, the form and limit of whose being the Creator alone knoweth.’ St. Augustine says, ‘An angel is called a *spirit* on account of what he *is*, and an *angel* on account of what he *does*,’ *i.e.* he goes forth as God’s messenger (ἄγγελος). As to their occupation, all are agreed that theirs is a life of worship, a life of service and a life of order ; and it is obviously with the second of these that this chapter is concerned, and only with a part of that.

That the holy angels minister to human needs is

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 10.

² *De Fid. Orth.* ii. 3.

plainly revealed in Holy Scripture. In Hebrews i. 14 they are described as 'ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation'; and this passage clearly refers to both the regions of their activity. If on the one hand they are spirits who minister in the worship of God, they are also sent forth by the Almighty for another kind of ministration, viz. to the needs of men. Here two preliminary questions present themselves; and the first is asked and replied to by Rev. Henry Latham in the introductory chapter of his book, 'A Service of Angels.' Knowing and believing as we do that God is our Almighty Father and that His love and care of His children are illimitable, what is there left for the angels to do for us which He has not done already? 'Inasmuch as God is everywhere at once, He must see everything; and inasmuch as He is the fountain of all love, He must care for us more than any angels possibly can. Why should not we be content with this, of which we are assured?'¹ Mr. Latham's answer to this is that the doctrine of angelic intervention is a matter of Biblical revelation; and if a further reply be needed, it is found in a reference to the almost universal principle according to which God deals with us, viz. His employment of agents and means. It is true, almost without exception, that God's dealings with us are not immediate but

mediate ; yet this is obviously no argument against His omnipresence, His omnipotence, or His Love. As Dr. A. B. Davidson says in his article on Angels in Hastings' 'Dictionary of the Bible': 'The God of Israel is above all things a living God, Who influences the affairs of the world and men, and rules them. If He uses agents, they are supplied by the "ministers" that surround Him.'

The other question is somewhat more philosophical and abstruse. Angels are, as has already been noticed, spiritual substances ; and, as will be shown later, their ministrations to man are partly temporal and material. But how can the spiritual work upon the material ? We cannot tell ; here is a mystery which cannot with any degree of certainty be solved. Yet that the material is affected by the spiritual, who, with any knowledge of human nature and life, would venture to deny ? Is it not a matter of experience that our 'own spirits work upon our fleshly frames' ? Does not the spiritual life of many a man, if vigorous and healthy, affect even his bodily state and the material circumstances and surroundings of his life ? Things unseen have the deepest effect upon things seen, just as the seen has upon the unseen ; there need be no opposition whatever between spirit and matter, but very much the reverse ; and 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'

Leaving these preliminary questions we come to the definite consideration of the holy angels as guardians. And first of all, it would appear that a particular charge of guardianship has been given to angels over kingdoms, nations, and Churches. This opinion has been held by many, St. Augustine and St. Clement of Alexandria for instance; and Dr. Pusey, in his 'Lectures on Daniel the Prophet,'¹ argues to a like effect. 'As Daniel was employed to disclose God's care and providence over heathen nations, so through him it was disclosed that, as God set one chief Angel as the deputed Guardian of His people, so He set others over other nations. It is in harmony with all which we know about those blessed spirits. . . . Daniel, declaring that the heathen also were the objects of God's care, taught, in the case of two great nations, Persia and Graecia, that they were under the care of eminent Angels, "princes" with God.'² For the angels of Persia and Graecia were, manifestly, good angels, since they desired the welfare of their people; and they contended with Gabriel and Michael before God, each, in submission to the Divine Will, desiring what seemed for the good of His people. . . . The interest of the heavenly beings in man had been revealed before. To Daniel it was made known as part of God's "mercy over all His works," that "constituting the services of angels and men

¹ P. 522, ed. 1864.

² Dan. x. 20, 21.

in a wonderful order," He assigned to each nation one of those "ministering spirits," to succour and defend them, and plead their cause with Himself, the Father of all.' From the same passage in Daniel we may infer that St. Michael was the prince or guardian angel of the Jewish nation. St. Basil speaks of 'national ruling angels'; and even Calvin in his 'Institutes' says that 'particular provinces are delivered over by God to angels' governance, as was wont to be done by emperors to their judges.'

Before leaving this part of our subject, reference must be made to modern examples of belief in the same doctrine. In Mr. Brand's 'Popular Antiquities' there is the following passage: 'It has long been, and still continues the custom, at Michaelmas or thereabouts, to elect the governors of towns and cities, the civil guardians of the peace of men; perhaps, as Bourne supposes, because the Feast of the Angels naturally enough brings to mind the old opinion of tutelary spirits who have, or are thought to have, the particular charge of bodies of men, or districts of country, as every man has his guardian angel.' And in Hone's 'Every Day Book' there is a similar allusion.

Of the office of the Holy Angels as Guardians of the Holy Catholic Church, Mr. Baring-Gould thus writes: 'Angels were constant in their guardianship of the Jewish Church till that Church brought

Christ's blood in condemnation upon it, when they passed over to the defence of the Catholic Church. These are the watchmen of whom Isaiah speaks as being set upon the walls of Jerusalem, never to hold their peace day and night. . . . Michael is the chief of these guardians. He was prince of the armies which stood round about the Jewish people ; now he is prince of the host guarding the Church of God.' ¹

We pass now to that part of our subject which is perhaps more fascinating because more poetical and more personal. Not only have the angelic bands been entrusted with the guardianship of societies of men, in nations and Churches, but also, it would appear, of individuals as well. So long as we confine ourselves to the *general* idea of the guardianship of individual men and women by angels, we are on perfectly safe ground, and may speak with certainty, since this is indisputably a matter of Scriptural revelation as well as of Church teaching. There is the well known promise of angelic protection which heads this chapter : ' He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.' There is also the definite assertion of Ps. xxxiv. 7 : ' The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' And there is the passage in the book of Job, ¹ in which Satan answers the Lord

¹ *Lives of the Saints* : ' Michaelmas Day.'

and says : 'Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side ?' It is significant to note that in both the Authorised and Revised Versions of the Bible, a parallel reference is given in the margin to Ps. xxxiv. 7, quoted above. But when we go further, and assume that each individual child of God has a guardian angel specially and particularly assigned to take care of him, we must be careful to remember that the realms of certainty are left behind, and that we are now travelling into the unknown. From this point to the end of our chapter we are in the regions of speculation and 'pious opinion,' and nothing is *de fide*, or 'an article of faith' ; and, as Bishop Hall says, 'Where God is silent, let us be willingly ignorant.'

Many have held, and hold, that every child of Adam without exception has a guardian angel from his birth to guide and protect him as long as his probation lasts. It is supposed that every human being, however degraded and wicked, has an angel as his companion all through life. Justin Martyr says that 'every man is attended with a guardian angel, according to the divine writings' ; and St. Jerome appears to agree with him in the following passage : 'Great is the dignity of souls, who have from their birth a delegate angel, commissioned from heaven, for their custody.' St.

¹ i. 10.

Thomas Aquinas maintains this opinion, and quotes St. Jerome in his favour.¹ His contention is that the privilege of being guarded by angels is a gift which, in the Providence of God, comes to man as man, like the gift of natural reason of which not even Antichrist himself is deprived.

Whether this be true or not, it seems more probable still that the baptized 'heirs of salvation' are individually protected by the power and influence of these ministering spirits. The former might be a benefit in the order of nature, here is a special ministry in the order of grace.² About this the Fathers and Doctors of the Church are practically unanimous. A large proportion of modern writers (Bishop Patrick and Bishop Wilson, for example—Bishop Hall is an exception) fix the commencement of this guardianship at baptism; while Puritan writers, as would be expected, prefer the moment of conversion.

As 'Guardians,' the holy angels may be said to protect us, in the Divine Providence, from 'dangers both ghostly and bodily.' There is a world of spiritual evil all about us; of the greater part of it perhaps we are hardly conscious, although we know that the malignity and subtilty and resource of the powers of evil are vast indeed. What

¹ *Summa*, First Part, quest. 113, § 4.

² See Darwell Stone, *Outlines of Christian Dogma*, pp. 281, 282.

a comfort to be able to turn from such a thought as this to the contemplation of our heavenly guardians! With unceasing fidelity, they warn the sinner, they aid the tempted, they breathe into the soul the holy inspirations of God. They weaken the blackening power of evil thoughts by putting good imaginations into our minds; they influence our power of choice, they illuminate and stimulate the conscience, they persuade the will. How often we neglect their warnings and reject their proffered help, because we are sordid, engrossed in mundane trifles! And consequently, although they are there beside us, we do not profit by their presence as we should. Yet apparently they never leave us, however careless and forgetful we may be; St. Thomas Aquinas is not alone in his belief that a man is never totally deserted by his guardian angel in this life.¹ And when the sinner turns to God in deep repentance, who can describe the angels' joy?

But there are also temporal ills—the 'bodily dangers' of which the Church Catechism speaks; and from these too, it would seem, the guardian angels are permitted by God to be powerful to deliver us. In Genesis xxi. 17 an angel speaks from heaven to Hagar and helps her in her necessity; though of course there is no proof that this was her guardian angel. In Daniel vi. 22 the prophet speaks to King Darius from the lions' den, and says,

¹ *Summa, l. c.* § 6.

'My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths.' And in Genesis xlviii. 16 the aged Jacob prays that the Angel who has redeemed him from all evil may bless his grandchildren Ephraim and Manasseh. A verse in the Apocrypha,¹ 'a good angel shall go with him,' seems to be the first definite allusion to the guardian angel of an individual. Another verse, often quoted in this connection, must be allowed to be doubtful. 'The well-known passage, "It is his angel," in Acts xii. 15, is frequently appealed to for proof of the doctrine of guardian angels. . . . Here the parallel between "his angel" and "the Lord's angel" in verse 11 may imply that the angel was some spiritual representative of St. Peter—perhaps, as we should say, "his ghost."'² And Dr. J. M. Neale takes the same view of this passage.

Many modern stories are told of angelic intervention in temporal danger, and some of these at any rate are well authenticated. A little child in America ran out into the street, but was run over by a passing tram-car. She was picked up and taken home as one dead. For a long time she lay in a kind of trance, though apparently unhurt. When she came to herself they asked her what she remembered of the accident. She told them

¹ Tobit v. 21.

² Rackham: *Acts of the Apostles*, in 'Oxford Commentaries,' pp. 178, 179.

clearly of a bright being in white who had lifted up the cruel wheels one after another so that they could not hurt her. The only traces of the accident upon her were two red marks across her body made by the wheels. This story comes from one who had seen the marks, and is told on unimpeachable authority; and Dr. Neale in his 'Unseen World' is one of those who have given it publicity. Such instances might easily be multiplied, but want of space forbids the relation of any others save one. A devout and well-to-do Cornish farmer was accustomed to go regularly into the market-town to sell his produce, and used to bring back his money in the gig at night, generally returning alone. The vicar of his parish asked him once if he was not afraid, under the circumstances, to drive back in the dark by himself; he replied that he preferred to be alone, for he always meditated on the way home, and frequently felt the close companionship of the angels. One night two colliers had plotted to waylay and kill him, and waited for his trap to return along the dark and lonely road. As the gig drew near, one of them cried, 'Good God! there are two of them.' And so there were, two men exactly alike; one on the right hand leaning forward in the act of driving, the other facing the robbers as the trap approached. The men fled in terror; and one of them, being taken ill shortly afterwards, made a clean breast of the evil plot, in the presence of a

priest. The farmer, on being asked for a solution of the mystery, simply replied that no one had accompanied him on that particular night, but that (as often before) he had felt the angels very near him. The truth of this story also rests on the strongest evidence, and it has often been re-told. An early number of 'Goodwill,' for instance, gave a thrilling rendering of it from the facile pen of the late Mr. Cary-Shuttleworth. The facts of the story are simply so much additional evidence of what every faithful Christian confidently knows to be true, viz. that our God keeps His promises, and the inspiring, comforting words of Psalm xci. are no exaggeration. A similar story is, I believe, told of John Wesley.

It would appear that the protection of the guardian angels ceases when this life is over ; though the connection of our subject with the problems of eschatology is obviously wrapped in mystery. St. Luke xvi. 22 seems to imply that angels minister to the soul at death, or at least just after it ; and from St. Jude 9 we may possibly infer that they have a care for the bodies of the holy dead. Their duty is to lead the soul they have with such solicitude watched and prayed for through the days of earthly life, straight to the Feet of God for the Particular Judgment ; then perhaps their work ceases until the Final Judgment at the Last Day, when before the Great White Throne they will render

an account of their stewardship, and bear their witness either for or against us. Yet it will be remembered that in Dr. Newman's 'Dream of Gerontius' the guardian angel not only accompanies the soul it loves so well to the bar of the Particular Judgment, but also receives it again when the 'happy, suffering soul' returns from 'the dear feet of Emmanuel,' and leads it to the 'penal waters' of Purgatory, into which he dips it carefully before bidding it farewell for a time.

Our last words must be on an important part of this subject hitherto unnoticed, viz. Our Lord's plain words concerning the children's guardian angels in St. Matthew xviii. 10. Here again we are without a doubt treading on the safe ground of revelation if we say (with Mr. Latham¹), that at any rate 'a certain company of angels collectively are given charge over children in general.' Many would fain go farther, and love to think that this or that beloved little one is under the special guardianship and care of some particular one of God's holy angels; but this is not matter of revelation, though perfectly innocent and edifying as a 'pious opinion.' In the passage referred to, Our Lord, to Whom the little ones of His flock are specially dear, is warning His disciples never to despise the children. Men in their dull stupidity may think lightly of them and imagine that it does not

¹ *L. c.* p. 97.

matter what they see, or hear, or suffer ; yet all the time they are the objects of the most earnest care and the most thoughtful anxiety on the part of those angelical guardians to whose protection they have been intrusted by their Heavenly Father. It is clear from this passage that angels exercise a very special care and guardianship over children to preserve their innocence. The stage of childish innocence is indeed a crucial time ; the character of a young child is so tender, so delicate, so susceptible to external influences, good or bad ; of this the angelic guardians never lose sight, though we are terribly apt to forget it. ‘The holy angels’ (says Fr. Clarke) ‘are especially jealous over the innocence of the young. Woe be to those who teach them evil or do not respect them as they ought ! Woe be to those who through their culpable neglect or carelessness allow children committed to them to mix with bad companions or run into peril of sin ! . . . God will hear the angels’ cry for vengeance on those who harm their little clients,’—since those guardian angels are ever in closest communion with God Himself.

As we contemplate these holy beings to whom for God’s sake the little ones are so dear, let us join them in their prayers for the children ; let us pray for all parents and teachers of the young that they may duly feel their great responsibility. And let us pray too that we may never be deprived of the

help which angelic hosts supply at God's command ; and that we may never be so engrossed in the things of sense as to be neglectful of their faithful ministrations.

‘ Still let them succour us ; still let them fight,
Lord of angelic hosts, battling for right ;
Till, where their anthems they ceaselessly pour,
We with the angels may bow and adore.’

G. W. H.

IN our extremest loneliness, in our lowest depression, in our heaviest pains, if we be earnest in throwing ourselves at God's feet in faithful penitence, the Angel is surely by to comfort us.

In the hour of death, he does not leave the spirit of the just to sink unsupported with the sinking body. He is by us in our cheerful moments, as well as in our graver ones. He is by us when we sleep or wake in the darkness of the night. We cannot pass our guardian angel's bound. While our life is militant here, while we are guarded and assisted by the angels, let us ever ask for grace to be as faithful, as loving, as obedient as they are, that by us at least, and those whom we can in any way reach or influence, the will of God may in some degree be done in earth, as it is done in Heaven.

Bishop George Moberly.

A CHILD ASLEEP

VISION unto vision calleth

While the young child dreameth on :

Fair O dreamer, thee befalleth

With the glory thou hast won!

Darker wast thou in the garden yestermorn by
summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing

Round thee, were the clouds away :

'Tis the child heart draws them, singing

In the silent-seeming day—

Singing! Stars that seem the mutest go in music
all the way.

As the moths around a taper,

As the bees around a rose,

As the gnats around a vapour,

So the spirits group and close

Roundabout a holy childhood as if drinking its
repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,

Flash their diadems of youth

On the ringlets which half screen thee,

While thou smilest . . . not in sooth

Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some
aetherial mouth.

Haply it is Angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall
see it fade.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
Now he lieth dead and dumb ;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room ;
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-
words as they come.

Speak not ! he is consecrated ;
Breathe no breath across his eyes :
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral
sanctities.

E. B. Browning.

CHAPTER XII

Angels of Good Tidings and Joy

But half so low as He hath bowed
Did never highest Angel stoop from brightest cloud.

J. KEBLE.

Omnes Angeli creatura serviens Christo est, . . .
ministrabant ei non tanquam misericordes indigenti,
sed tanquam subjecti omnipotenti.

ST. AUGUSTINE.



THE ANNUNCIATION.

17. Gambier Parry, 1884.

Angels of Good Tidings and Joy

THE ANNUNCIATION

BY what message and by whose lips should the best of all good tidings come to mankind? Let the Collect for the Annunciation give the answer: 'By the message of an angel.'

Yet how often the full significance of this manner of the Annunciation is missed. What is that significance? Let the imagination go back to the dawn of creation and to the picture of that dawn as it is conceived in the Book of Job, where it is thought of as the hour 'when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' The heavens were indeed open then, when as yet the race that was to walk by faith and not by sight was still uncreated, when all that was done was done in a bright and glorious sunshine of worship and joy, and obedience itself was not a thing of pain and submission but of perfect freedom and unalloyed delight.

'Songs of praise the Angels sang,
Heaven with Alleluias rang,
When Creation was begun,
When God spake and it was done.'

Then, let imagination fold her wing and history take up the unfolding of things on earth as the abode of man. Let memory record how he fell from the obedience of angels and became himself as a fallen angel, not fallen indeed into utter rebellion, but into disobedience and walking in a world where the heavens are no longer open, save by gleam and vision at rare spaces of time, and where he is conscious of a depth beneath as well as of a height above: a depth that he may fall into if he is not saved, and towards which there is some base gravitation in his nature which he feels himself powerless to counteract, except he shall receive help from above. There in that region of history he still dreams of the world above, of angels unfallen who come to help him, who guard indeed the Tree of Life and suffer him not in his disobedience to approach it, but who nevertheless by their presence proclaim that it is there and mark the place where it is to be found.

And not only do those sentinels stand there, but wheresoever he goes, others of the host are still found to minister to him. He sees them on the ladder of vision ascending and descending between heaven and earth. He sees one of them in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush, assuring him that man is not utterly cast away, that heaven and earth are in communion still, and earth still watched and guided from on high. Again, he will see one

of them leading his nation by day and night through the wilderness, and 'many a time' in this or that crisis of national or personal life will some glimpse come to him of the angel that encampeth round about them that fear God, or of those chariots of God which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. For as in the visible things of the rain and fruitful seasons, so also in the invisible things of the spirit, God did not in the old covenant leave Himself without witness.

But now it is the time of the new covenant, when a new force is to come to counteract the gravitation of evil. It is the morning of a new day that is to dawn on the world, the hour of a new creation, the bringing in of a better hope than of the land of Canaan and the old Jerusalem. It is the beginning of a new time, the rising of another sun which shall be no ball of fire, but a Being full of Grace and Truth. The heavens shall be once more opened, and not in dream only or vision of the night, but in very deed and in the light of a new day. Can any human lips be worthy to bear such news? No, even though that Sun shall rise on human nature and be born of a pure Virgin; even though He shall touch and tarry for awhile upon the earth itself and come through the gate of birth and be the child of a human Mother.

Yet, though it shall be so, the first clear tidings of this Gospel shall come, as He will come, from

above, and be spoken by the lips of an angel, even Gabriel, 'sent from God, unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, and the Virgin's name was Mary.' Already had those same lips heralded the very Herald of the coming Lord, guarding and fore-showing, as it were, by a double line of heavenly glory, the Majesty of Him who should in due time appear.

It is surely a defect in the modern hymn to have missed the significance and beauty of this single and magnificent note in the Gospel record. Choruses and choirs are beautiful, but so also, and in a special way, is there a beauty and loveliness in the sound of a solitary voice, and such is the effect as we read in the sacred page of the voice of Gabriel speaking to the Maid of Nazareth and uttering that first note which presently the Angels of the Nativity shall take up when they shall awake

' the morn
When the Prince of Peace was born.'

W. H. D.

THE NATIVITY

An angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them . . .

And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid ; for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. . . .

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.—St. Luke ii. 9-13, R.V.

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er th' expanse of Heaven?
In waves of light it thrills along,
Th' angelic signal given—
'Glory to God!' from yonder central fire
Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry quire.

KEBLE.

THE song of the Angels was the first public preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Its Advent had been announced privately to those who were elected to be its instrument, in dream and vision, in angelic salutation, in inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

It had been recognised and welcomed in words such as had never yet burst from the hearts of men from human gladness, from human hope: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

But beyond the sacred home at Nazareth, and in the priestly city in the hill-country of Judah, the first announcement to those outside, to the representatives of those 'poor to whom the Gospel was to be preached,' was in the angelic visit and the angelic 'Gospel of great joy,' to the shepherds who were watching in the fields where the patriarchs

had fed their flocks. Their hymn of praise, which was the first news to the world that its Saviour was come, was also the first note in that triumphant song of deliverance, which was taken up by the Church below, to be continued day by day through the centuries over all the earth, and never cease till it shall swell into the 'new song' of the Church above. With the Lord's Prayer, with the Magnificat and Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis, it became a stated and necessary part of the public language of the Church in its most solemn worship. In its highest offering of Eucharistic praise, the words of the Seraphim in the Temple under the Old Dispensation, 'Holy, Holy Holy, Lord God of Hosts,' are answered by those of the angels around Bethlehem in the New: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

Dean Church (1815-1890).

ANGELS, greater than we in power and resources, who have never fallen from their first estate, and have freely offered to God through long ages a perfect service, behold God in His unfathomable condescension passing them by, as He bends to help and ennoble the inferior and fallen race of man.

They are too pure, these lofty spirits, to harbour the slightest feeling of envy or resentment; but they desire reverently to look into this new revelation of the infinitude of the attributes of their King; they wonder at a condescension which must be right but which they cannot understand.

‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is,’ not with angels, but ‘with men!’¹

The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was to the spiritual world what the rising of the sun is in the world of nature. Even upon the orders of heavenly intelligences it had effects, at which St. Paul hints in his Epistle to the Ephesians.²

But for the human soul it meant a passage from darkness to light, and from cold to sunshine.

Prophecy had bidden Zion arise and shine, since her Light had come, and the glory of the Lord had risen upon her.³ The Sun of Righteousness was announced, Who should arise with healing in His wings. Although darkness had covered the earth and gross darkness the people, yet the Lord should arise upon Zion, and His glory be seen upon her. Accordingly Zacharias salutes Him as ‘the Day Star from on high Who hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death’⁴; and Simeon, holding the Divine Saviour in his arms, proclaims that He is ‘a Light to lighten the Gentiles.’

When Jesus, the Sun of the moral world, rose above the horizon of time, first one and then another height was touched by His rays; and gradually the light crept down the hillsides, and reached the valleys of human life, so that no scene was too remote to be bathed in its warmth and splendour.

¹ Rev. xxi. 3.

² Eph. iii. 9-11.

³ Isa. lx. 1.

⁴ St. Luke i. 78, 79.

Some of us will remember that great work of Christian genius, the picture of the Nativity—the *Notte*, as it is called, by Correggio, which is among the treasures of the Dresden Gallery. In it the Divine Infant is represented as with a body almost transparent with light, and from Him the light streams on all around; His Mother, His foster-father, the Angels, are illuminated in the proportion of their nearness to Him. This is but a representation on canvass of a spiritual and eternal truth. He is the one Light of the world, and we are in the light just so far, and only so far, as we are near Him.

H. P. Liddon.

JESUS CHRIST was born to-day ;
 There is Joy above.
 ‘ Peace on Earth ! ’ the Angels say,
 ‘ Peace and Love ! ’

Mary clasped the Baby feet,
 Clasped them to her breast.
 Peace is sweet, and Joy is sweet,—
 Love is best !

A. C. Benson.

THE Lord of all has become a servant. All the Angels of heaven marvel at this, and it is the greatest wonder that Eternity has seen, for it is against nature, and *this is Love indeed.*

Jacob Behmen.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL

THERE is perhaps no better illustration of the main feature in the character of Angels as God's messengers than the glimpses we are given in the Bible of the angel Gabriel.

The name 'Gabriel' is derived from two Hebrew words, 'Geber' = man 'El' = God, and means a 'man of God'—*i.e.*, as the angel explains to Zacharias,¹ one who 'stands in the presence of God'; and not in the sense in which the term 'a man of God' was applied to the prophets in the Old Testament.

In considering the office and work of Gabriel as the Angel of Good Tidings and Joy, it will help us if we gather from Scripture and tradition the various references to him.

In the Jewish writings about angels, Gabriel occupies a very important place. He seems to be the companion of St. Michael; and both of them appear as in the rank of princes, or guardian angels of the nations, rather than of individuals.

Gabriel's messages to Daniel, Zacharias, and the Blessed Virgin relate to God's purposes for His people in and through the instrumentality of the person to whom the message was delivered.

He is referred to in the Book of Enoch as one of the four great Archangels; and also² as one of the seven angels which stand before God, who present the prayers of the saints, and go to and fro before God. The Jewish 'Targums' make Gabriel

¹ St. Luke i. 19.

² Rev. viii. 1.

‘the man’ who showed Joseph the way to his brethren,¹ who, with Michael and others, takes part in the burial of Moses,² and who was sent to destroy the armies of Sennacherib.³

There is a very important passage, Daniel viii. 15–19, in which Gabriel is expressly named as explaining to the man greatly beloved by God the meaning and purpose of the vision he had just seen—the vision of the ram and the he goat—and also Jeremiah’s prophecy about the return of the Jews from Babylon after seventy weeks of years—*i.e.* 490 years.⁴

In these incidents as related in Daniel we get the true idea of God’s great message of comfort to man ; the germ which finds its fullest development in the New Testament and in our Blessed Lord Himself and the Holy Spirit.

The main burden of God’s message to Daniel was strength. The servant of God in Babylon, as his predecessor on the banks of Jordan, was bidden to ‘be strong ; yea, be strong.’ Both Joshua and Daniel needed all the strength they could receive ; and so the angel messenger comes with an assurance of strength—‘To them that have no might, He increaseth strength,’ whether it be to such humble souls as the Blessed Virgin (see her expressions in the Magnificat) or to such strenuous ones as St. Paul, who cries out, ‘I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.’⁵ There is a world of hidden

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 15.

² Deut. xxxiv. 6.

³ 2 Chron. xxxii. 21.

⁴ Jeremiah xxvii.–xxix. 10.

⁵ Phil. iv. 13.

power for weak human nature in the magic word 'comfort.' Its derivation from the Latin words 'con'='together' and 'fortis'='strong' gives us the key to its true foundation meaning—to be fortified with and by the power of God. And being 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might' we are truly comforted, and enabled to go on from strength to strength. It is just this root idea of 'comfort' that Gabriel specially brings as his Master's message to struggling, earnest hearts and lives. *Not* the mere common idea of soothing the sufferer, and trying to help him to escape from the pressing pain that overpowers him. *Not* the wail of the persecuted Psalmist, 'O that I had wings like a dove; then would I fly away and be at rest.'¹ But the spirit which breathes through the prayer in the contest in Gethsemane, the prayer for power and strength to endure, not to escape from the Cross: 'Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.'² In response the angel of comfort appears to strengthen Jesus.

'The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost' gives strength to the Christian soul. He is especially 'the Strengthener'—*i.e.* the true Comforter; and as such He brings glad tidings of great joy to those who submit themselves to His guidance. There seems to be a very close analogy between the office and work of the Holy Spirit and the duties of angelic spirits. Our Lord says that the Holy Ghost 'the Comforter shall teach you all things,

¹ Ps. iv. 6.

² St. Luke xxii. 42.

and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.’¹ This He does of and by Himself in His own Divine inherent power ; for He is God as truly as the Father and the Son. The angels bring to man—not of their own initiative, but by Divine order—messages and tidings of truest strengthening comfort.

It has been well said, ‘Angels are God’s thoughts in action.’ Hence, ‘when the fulness of the time was come,’ what messenger more in accordance with previous good news to men could be sent from Heaven than Gabriel to announce to the Virgin who was ‘highly favoured’ with God the Gospel or glad tidings of the Incarnation ?

Ages before this Gabriel, the man of God, had been sent to Daniel, ‘the man greatly beloved,’ with the glad news of the restoration of the Jews 490 years later ; now the same spirit comes from the Presence of God to her whom all after generations are to call ‘Blessed,’ with the far more glorious message of the restoration of a lost and sin-laden race, not to the temporal Jerusalem, but to the true City of God—‘the city that hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God’²—through the Life and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Mary’s Divine and Perfect Son. There is an instructive comparison between the three recorded messages of God to man by the agency of Gabriel. Daniel was strengthened by the news and by the personal contact with the angel : ‘He touched me.’³ His heart had been prepared by long com-

¹ St. John xiv. 26.

² Heb. xi. 10.

³ Dan. ix. 21.

muning with God for any revelation of Divine purpose. He had stood firm for the faith of his fathers amidst many and powerful temptations to forsake it. The Blessed Virgin had long before learned the deeper truths of the Jews' religion as it was taught in her day. She had looked, like other holy souls, pure in heart, far, far deeper into the things which belonged to her peace, as Simeon and Anna and Nathaniel had done. There were 'loyal hearts and true,' which, like the Apostles, had drunk in the truths 'hidden from the wise and prudent'; and to such hearts as were filled with a childlike faith, the message of the Incarnation awoke a deep joy and gladness amongst the 'men of goodwill.' The news which Simeon and Anna had to tell to all that 'were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem' was such as would fill their hearts with joyous recognition of God's fulfilment of His promised Messiah's Advent.

If Daniel was strengthened by Gabriel's touch, how much more was the world benefited by the contact of the Divine Lord of Angels with our human nature. The touch of Emmanuel with humanity which was the substance of Gabriel's message to the Blessed Virgin Mary brought 'life and immortality to light through the Gospel.'

Gabriel's message finds a true fulfilment in the announcement by a single Angel to the shepherds at Bethlehem, and the glad chorus of the heavenly host, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

We are not told in Holy Scripture the name of

the individual angel who announced the Nativity—and who strengthened our Lord in Gethsemane. But reverent and devout thought may not unfitly regard Gabriel as the messenger of the Most High in these momentous instances.

When we regard Gabriel's message to Zacharias, we find the stern discipline used not so much to punish as to strengthen the doubting Priest. It was good news that the angel brought to him, but because of the perplexity of Zacharias at the unlooked-for—almost unprecedented—appearance of the angel, he is allowed to reveal his name and place in the hierarchy of Heaven. 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.'¹ And the very dumbness which was imposed upon Zacharias till the birth of his son, was to be used as a time of meditation and deep pondering upon the future training of the Forerunner for his great work of 'making ready a people prepared for the Lord.' The thought of the future son's work could not be separated in the priest's mind from that infinitely greater Life and Work of Mary's Son that was to follow upon the preparatory ministry of the child as yet unborn.

A parallelism may be fitly noticed between Zacharias the Priest and St. Thomas the Apostle. There was very much in common between the characters of the two men. Zacharias was 'righteous before God, blameless as regards all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.' St. Thomas

¹ St. Luke i. 19.

was earnestly devoted to his Lord and Master. 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him,'¹ was the appeal to his brethren when Jesus announced His intention of again risking His life by going into hostile Judaea to raise Lazarus from his 'sleep.' The news of the Messiah's Advent and of the Resurrection of Jesus was probably held by priest and apostle alike as almost too good to be true. So in the one case an Archangel, and in the other the Risen Lord of angels Himself, strengthened the halting yet heartfelt faith of the two servants of God.

It only remains to look at the special points which the personality (in the true sense of *character*—not externals) of Gabriel suggests.

1. His universally accorded high position in the angelic hierarchy springs from that character which both in angels and in human saints marks out the Divine regard for those beings whose chiefest happiness and glory and work it is to proclaim the love of God far and wide. The character that seeks to make God's way known upon earth, His saving health among all nations, is that of one who stands consciously or subconsciously 'in the presence of God.' 'Here am I; send me.' The great missionary spirit, the mainspring of all true evangelistic effort, whether amid home or foreign heathen, Gabriel's spirit, 'broods upon' the mission field—hovers over the people who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and goes forth in the power of God's might to encourage and strengthen the human agents who

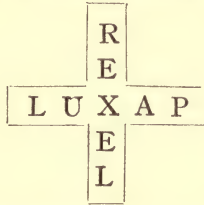
seek to spread the joyous tidings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The gifts that such men of God imbued with Gabriel's spirit bear with them are priceless—life and immortality through the Gospel. The greatest Gift of all—the gift of the Saviour to a sin-laden world ; One who was to save His people, not in, but from, their sins. The gift of Emmanuel—God with us. As it was with St. Paul to the Athenians ‘ a strange thing to our ears,’ because he preached to them ‘ Jesus (that is, the Incarnation), and the Resurrection ’¹ ; so the preaching of Jesus Christ is ever ‘ strange ’ to ears that have not heard, and hearts that have not held, it. But it is *the* gift which has sent the martyrs in a noble host to swell the chorus of the new song of praise—it is *the* gift which has sent workers into the slums, and into the islands of the sea ; into the wildernesses and solitary places of the world. *The* gift that sent St. Bernard of Aosta to his Alpine pass, a Livingstone to Africa, a Gordon to Khartoum, a Patteson to Melanesia, a Damien to the lepers—and many a young doctor and nurse into fever-stricken dens—as well as bishops, priests, and deacons in the exercise of their ministry to ‘ proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’

3. The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The true Lux Mundi. Even as the Cross on the west front of the Norman Conqueror's Cathedral at Caen has Lux—as well as Lex, Pax, and Rex—engraven on its arms, and

¹ Acts xvii. 18, 20.

each sharing the terminal letter with each word, thus :



so the Light of Life is bound up with the Peace of God, the Law of God, and the Kingship of God—in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Gabriel foretold the Cross in his message to the Blessed Virgin ; its shadow was over all her after life, till the cruel sword pierced her soul at Calvary's Tree. The Light that Gabriel announced to lighten the Gentiles ; that 'Lux Benigna' that leads us on 'o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone.' The Light that never was on sea or land. Even 'the Light of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ.'

Lastly, the guidance that Gabriel gave and which enabled 'the man greatly beloved' to be 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.' To do the will, to accomplish the purpose of God. This must be each one's aim. The angelic work of leading others heavenward is only possible when we ourselves are going along that road. May thoughts of Gabriel encourage us to persevere. May we find the words of the Psalmist true for each one of us : 'They go from strength to strength ; every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.'¹

L. R. W.

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

CHAPTER XIII

Ministering Angels

They who nearest stand
Always to God in Heaven and see His Face,
Go forth at His command
To wait around our path in weal or woe.

J. KEBLE.





THE GARDEN OF GETHESEMENE.
(*T. Gambier Parré, 1884*)

HEARKEN ! The Voice of the Lord !
Few heeded it on earth ; what time He came
In agony, His earthly servants slept,
And when He looked to see if any did
Take pity on Him, none were found to heed.
But to the ear of God His cry went up,
And through the wide Halls of the Father's House
It echoed strangely ; till the Sons of God
Stood silent in their places. And the Voice
Of God spake out, commanding one to go
With heavenly consolations, unto Him
Whose cry came up before the Holy Throne.

Hearken ! The Voice of the Lord !
The Angel in his shining garments stands
In the dim garden, and beside the Man
Whose face is marred with sorrow, on whose brow
The shades of death are gathering, and whose eyes
Are dim with tears and watchings. And, behold !
The Angel veils his face with his white wings,—
His face which is so bright from Heaven's own sun,
His eyes which shine with an undying light,—
Before this Countenance, which is so worn,
So dim with anguish, and before those eyes

Which are so near to death. Yea, doth he veil
His face more closely, in the Presence high
Of this unconquerable Love, this power
To suffer all things, even unto death ;
Then he had veiled it, standing in the glow
Of the great Sapphire Throne, and knowing not
The depths and heights of this strong Love of God.

Hearken ! The Voice of the Lord !

‘ *B. M.* ’

Ministering Angels

‘THAT they may succour and defend us on earth.’ So we pray in the noble Collect for Michaelmas Day, and the prayer brings the Angels near to us and our needs. While it is an uplifting exercise of the imagination to conceive of them, as the reader has been invited to do in former chapters, worshipping in their ‘orders nine before the throne,’ and ‘doing God service in heaven,’ it is an easier and simpler task to dwell on their ministry to us on earth—though indeed that must be a part of their service to God. We know so much of the many and great dangers in which we are set that, even if there were no facts to assure us of angelic succour, we should be eager to fancy the presence of some unseen helpers surrounding us with strong and tender guardianship.

But the Gospels turn the fancy into fact. They tell us of angels ‘ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’—bearing up His prayers and aspirations to the Father’s throne, and bringing down succour according to His need. And it is the Son of Man on whom they ascend and descend.

Not only His own Human Person, but all humanity in Christ is linked by a ministry of angels to the Father.¹ They succour and defend us.

Of course they are revealed as present at the great moments of His Conception and Birth. Gabriel comes with his message to our Lady at Nazareth. Another 'herald angel' comes to the shepherds at Bethlehem on Christmas Night. But these are messengers—angels of good tidings and joy, of which the previous chapter has already treated—rather than ministers, though, as soon as holy imagination begins to fill up the unrevealed spaces in the Gospel story, we picture the angels ministering to the Babe and His Mother :

'And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harness'd angels sit in order serviceable.'²

Still one way of reverencing the Gospel records is to respect their silences. They end, as we remember, by assuring us that if the whole story were told, 'even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.'³ But what is actually written and preserved for us can become the spring of faith and life. And it is only at the two great spiritual crises of the Lord's life, when

¹ See *The Study of the Gospels*, by the Dean of Westminster, p. 66. 'Wherever our Lord uses the term "Son of Man," He speaks not only for Himself but for "man" whom He has "taken upon Himself to deliver him."'

² Milton's *Ode on the Nativity*.

³ St. John xxi. 25.

the inner conflict with evil and the evil one gathered into a point—at the Temptation in the wilderness and the Agony in the garden—that we are distinctly told of angels ministering to Him.

But is it not strange and even terrible to notice that the first reference to angels at the Temptation comes from the evil one himself? It is he who offers our Lord their solace and succour,¹ ‘citing for his purpose’ the gracious promise of the 91st Psalm, ‘He shall give His angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ And the offer constitutes, according to St. Luke’s order of the scenes of the Temptation, its climax and crown. It was the masterpiece of the devil’s wiles. If he could only persuade the Son of God to make this self-willed venture of faith and to demand this exhibition of angelic power on His behalf, he would have Him in his power. Does it mean that the devil—a fallen angel himself—who had carried Christ, whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, up to this dizzy height, was transforming himself into an angel of light, and was ready to bear Him down securely in his hands? Such a sign might have brought a temporary glory to the Lord and have struck wonder into the multitudes assembled in the temple courts. But it would not have been in the line of the Father’s Will, and the good angels,

¹ St. Luke iv. 10, 11.

who always do that Will in heaven, could have had no part in it. So the offer was rejected. To have yielded would have been to make a needless self-willed experiment with God's promises. He would not tempt the Lord His God.¹ And we learn from our Lord's experience that we cannot be sure that behind every beautiful and uplifting feeling that may visit us there is to be found an angel's ministry. We must 'try the spirits.' What looks like an angelic visitation may really be a device of the devil leading us to seek our own glory, to make rash experiments with our faith, to put ourselves, by our own motion, into difficult and doubtful situations. Some of the saddest wrecks in the moral life have been occasioned by this spiritual recklessness. The soul becomes elated and excited. It 'winds itself too high.' It ventures on some unbidden task that lies outside the leading of God's Spirit. It takes liberties with God. And just because it has soared so high, like Icarus in the ancient legend, on the wings of self-confidence, the fall is all the more disastrous. To be placed on some pinnacle of spiritual fame or popularity, to be heated with glowing imaginations which may even express themselves in the words of Holy Scripture, is to meet the most severe and subtle temptation that can happen to a soul. It is so easy to lose one's

¹ St. Luke iv. 12.

balance ; to reel under the ecstasy of emotion, to lose the clear calm discernment of good and evil, to 'let one's feelings run in soft luxurious flow.' And while angels may seem to be surrounding us and prompting beautiful thoughts and words, we may be actually falling into a snare of the devil.

But the angels came at last. 'Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.'¹ It was the reward for patient endurance. He had 'walked humbly with His God,' in the path of His Father's commandments. He had not 'entered into temptation' by any act of self-will. But when the Spirit had led Him—'driven Him,'² as St. Mark says—against the foe, He met and mastered the power of evil, and then there followed the ministry of angels.

But how did they minister to Him? Did they prepare a table before Him in the wilderness, just as the ravens had brought food to Elijah at the brook Kerith? Did they hush Him to sleep, exhausted as He must have been after the storm and stress of temptation, and

' Spread their white wings about Him,
Watching round His bed ' ?

or did they just do what the poet asks that the 'dear and great angel' might do with him after

¹ St. Matt. iv. 11.

² St. Mark i. 12.

the ministry to the little child at his prayers was finished ?

‘ I would rest

My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast.

. . . till every nerve had soothing
And all lay quiet, happy, and supprest.’¹

We can only be sure that the blessed angels brought to the Lord unspeakable calm and refreshment of body and spirit, and that their solace was the recompense for His loyal, unswerving obedience in the hour of trial. And as we read on in St. Luke’s story² how ‘ he returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee . . . and taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all,’ we are made to feel with what readiness, almost with what radiance, of body and soul He set about His Father’s business in the world.

And for ourselves we may thankfully ascribe, under God, to the agency of the angels any ‘ comforts ’ which ‘ have refreshed our souls,’ comforts which we have not snatched at through self-will or self-indulgence ; but which have been sent us out of God’s royal bounty. Why should we not recognise the angel’s ministry in those ‘ extraordinary mercies ’ which Robert Louis Stevenson, in one of his evening household prayers at Vailima, asked might be blessed to his family—a sudden relief

¹ R. Browning’s *Guardian Angel*.

² St. Luke iv. 14, 15.

from long-continued pain or from a strong and distressing assault of evil, or that unaccountable thrill of peace and joy which sometimes floods our whole being in the midst of some familiar scene or task, and which invests it with an altogether fresh meaning and delight? If, as Newman says in his wonderful sermon on the angels,¹ 'every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven,' then, when these things bring us some special pleasure and recovery from languor or gloom, the angels may, indeed, be not only passing by, but pausing to offer us an individual ministration.

But then in due course there came to our Lord the deeper experience of the Agony at Gethsemane, when the devil, who had left Him 'for a season,' returned for a more terrible and final assault, suggesting to Him the possibility of escape from the pain and shame of the Passion. And Christ's reply to St. Peter, when the latter began to smite with the sword, shows plainly what part the angels might have played in that escape if, *per impossibile*, by an act of self-will He had claimed such a deliverance from His Father: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and He shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?' But He

¹ *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. serm. xxix.

adds, 'How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?'¹ So, again, just as at the Temptation, He refuses the offer of help, whether from man or angel, which should cause Him to swerve one hair's breadth from the path along which the Father is leading Him, or which, to use His own figure, should hinder Him from draining to the dregs the cup which His Father was giving Him. And so again, just because He obeys and endures, the solace unasked—and, shall we dare to say, unlooked for?—comes according to His need. And when the inner agony of spirit was so poignant that it expressed itself in the outward sweat of blood, 'there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him.'² The text, indeed, as the margin of our Revised Version reminds us, is omitted in many ancient manuscripts and versions. Yet, even if the incident be no part of the original record, it is easy to account for the gloss. It is the natural explanation of what the disciples must have observed as they watched Him rise from the ground and go to meet the crowd that was entering the garden—the calm victorious mien with which he met his captors, and which, alternating with throbs and spasms of anguish, He displayed throughout the hours of His Passion. It is St. John, 'in whose record no voice of suffering finds a place,' who reveals, beyond any other Evangelist, the

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

² St. Luke xxii. 43.

majesty of the Passion.¹ He does not tell us of the Agony in the garden, but he alone describes the effect which the Lord's presence and words produced on the band of soldiers. 'When, therefore, He said unto them, "I am He," they went backward and fell to the ground.'² How can we explain this strange transition from the prostrate agony of prayer to the royal majesty of appearance which struck a momentary terror into His foes? Was it not the angels' ministry which had brought Him from God this sudden access of strength and brightness that flashed forth in his look and words?

So, perhaps, the broad simple lessons which we may gather from these recorded instances of angels succouring our Lord in His earthly life are just these:

First, their ministry seems to bring a sort of refreshment and recovery that is physical in its effects. When, after a season of trial and effort and pain, we are visited with some unexpected brightness which enables us to 'rise and take our task,' calmly and gladly, 'upon the battlefield of of life,' then we may most clearly and thankfully believe that angels have been at work with us. 'Think,' asks Karshish in his epistle,

'Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?'³

¹ See Bishop Westcott's *The Victory of the Cross*, p. 95.

² St. John xviii. 6.

³ R. Browning, *An Epistle*.

That is what the angels can do for us. Why should we not ascribe to their agency whatever is real, and wholesome, and permanent in the accredited triumphs of mind over matter of which we hear so much to-day? It is as if the angels rejoiced to communicate to those who are often weighed down by the corruptible body something of their own alacrity and joyousness of service. 'They excel in strength,' and we have most evidently profited by their ministry when, like them, we have been 'made ready in body as well as spirit cheerfully to accomplish those things,'¹ or to bear those things, which God's Will orders for us, and when others can see in us some outward tokens of this cheerfulness in service. It is surely remarkable that the only instance in the Bible of a human being looking like an angel is not some innocent child or tender woman, but the young man Stephen as he confronted his judges with a wisdom and courage which they could not withstand.² Strength, not sweetness, is the mark of angels, and their ministry must always mean the imparting of some sort of strength. They 'anoint and cheer our face' when it is 'soiled' with depression, or weariness, or pain.

Then, secondly, if we have read rightly the meaning of our Lord's experience, we learn that in this region of angelic ministry it is easy to be

¹ Collect for Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

² Acts vi. 15.

deluded by vain, mischievous fancies. We may imagine ourselves to be cradled and carried in angels' hands, when all the while we are only feeding our spiritual vanity and indulging ourselves in unreal ideas which are prompted from below and not from above. We must not fling ourselves upon the stones, and then expect God to send us His promised succours. They are only pledged to us when we are walking in the path of obedience and service. Our daily prayer must be, not for angelic consolations, but that we may be kept undauntedly and perseveringly in this path. It is without doubt strewn with stones, and we shall often stumble. But there will be all sorts of surprising interventions and providences to save us from dashing ourselves against the stones. We need not ask too anxiously that we may be conscious of angelic presences and solaces. That might only weaken our purpose and our progress. But if we are faithful to God's leading, just when the strain of temptation or suffering seems to be reaching its breaking-point, the angels will come 'unawares' to succour us and to brace us for fresh conflict and victory.

Does this possibility of delusion about the reality of angels' visits at all account for the marked silence of the Bible about them just where we might have most expected their presence to be revealed—at the hour of death? We cannot wonder that

great painters of the Crucifixion have set the angels round the Cross, such as, to take only one instance, Luini's great fresco in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli at Lugano. And they must have been there, not only desiring to stoop and look into the mystery of the Passion, but also ministering to the Soul and Body of the dying Lord. Yet 'something sealed the lips' of the Evangelists. And their reserve stands in sharp contrast to the details of visions and voices of angels with which death-bed scenes have often been embellished by later and uninspired writers. Are we wrong if we think of our Lord offering us the example of a humble, rather than a happy, death? The seven measured sayings, closing with the child-like committal of His soul to the Father's Hands, and that, as we may suppose, only the recital of the evening Psalm which He had learnt, like any Jewish child, from His Mother, seem to caution us against encouraging in ourselves or in others any demonstrations of speech or feeling which might easily interfere with the realities of that last dread hour.

‘ And I would pass in silence, Lord,
No brave words on my lips,
Lest pride should cloud my soul, and I
Should die in the eclipse.’¹

¹ Faber's Hymns, *Wishes about Death*.

Yet we may and ought to pray for the succouring presence of the angels, for death as well as for life. Just as in the Compline Collect at the close of each day we pray that God's holy angels may abide in our dwelling to keep us in peace through the hours of darkness, so we shall pray for their guardianship when the shadows of death are closing in. Any who, like the writer, have been privileged to spend the Festival of the Angels at St. Michael's College, Tenbury, and have heard that perfect choir sing, to Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley's exquisite setting, the hymn, 'They come, God's messengers of love,'¹ are never likely to forget it.

'They come to watch around us here,
To soothe our sorrow, calm our fear:
Ye heavenly guides, speed not away,
God willeth you with us to stay.

But chiefly at its journey's end
'Tis yours the spirit to befriend,
And whisper to the faithful heart,
"O Christian soul, in peace depart."

An Angel guard to us supply,
When on the bed of death we lie;
And by Thine own Almighty power,
O shield us in the last dread hour.'

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth

¹ No. 424, Hymns A. & M.

to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation ?

F. E. C.

THE thought that we, each one of us, small as our capacity may be, in all that we do, and in all our inward changes of feeling and thought, are objects of the keenest interest to hosts of Spiritual Personalities ; the feeling that we are, and cannot help being, sources of joy or of comparative sorrow to immortal beings, in whose memory this joy or grief remains embedded ; immortal beings, we may say, who possibly, though here we float away into realms that leave scope for imagining, find in following the turnings of our minds, in the analysis of our hearts, and the discernment of our spirits, an occupation congenial to their nature, and one which may be the field appointed for the exercise of some of their powers,—this thought, while it wakens in us a new sense of responsibility and awe, gives us, at the same time, a higher kind of care for ourselves. Tennyson makes his hero say that if he were beloved, ‘ then he would be to himself more dear,’ and that all the common routine of his daily life would be endued with an interest

which it had not hitherto known. In like manner, if we believe that the angels of God love us, and take a lively and affectionate interest in our doings, as we do in those of our children, now delighting and now grieving, but saved from desponding, where we might despond, by being able 'to see the end and know the good,' less imperfectly than the wisest man; and if, while living here on earth, we are all the while able to add to the Joy of Heaven, or cause sorrow there, then we must become more precious in our own eyes, knowing that we can bring about more imperishable effects than we had dreamt of before.

Henry Latham (1821-1902).

THE Angels ministered to Christ through all His life on earth. And as they ministered to Him so do they also to us. . . . As we think of the angels' love, and contemplate the destinies so strangely interwoven with our own, as we find, by the teaching of God's Word, their influence crossing our path at every step in our life, warding off dangers from us, bringing us God's help besought of Him in prayer, aiding us in our warfare of temptation, teaching us the heart music with which, in silent praise and active gratitude, we thank God for all His mercies; still more as we 'see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man,' in holiest ministrations,—is there no thought in our heart of a work, not only on

which to gaze, but in which to share,—the ministering to our brethren, and in them to Christ Himself ?

G. C. Harris.

How much more vividly, and in what truer perspective altogether, this presence and work of the Angels was formerly held, is illustrated in a curious way in some of our old churches. The Gospel record of our Lord's Baptism tells us that 'the Heavens were opened.' We too often think only of the Dove descending ; but there is an old church in the north, dating from Norman times,¹ in which the builders have depicted the scene of the Baptism in rude but inspired carved-work of stone ; and there is seen not only the figure of the Dove coming down upon the head of the Anointed One, but on the right hand is an Angel flying with the chrisom—the white robe which is the sign and symbol of grace. The thought was a true one. How should the Heavens be opened and no angels be seen ? How should the Lord Christ be anywhere and not attended by those Ministers of His who do His pleasure, and who only wait the word of command to minister unto Him and unto all whom He has chosen to be heirs of salvation ? O that in the years before us this thought may be recovered, as the Church's daily faith, that we are even now come unto Mount Sion and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of

¹ Adel Church, Yorkshire.

angels, who with us are the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and that we are even now called to stand before God and share in some measure the communion of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant.

W. H. D.

CHAPTER XIV

Angels of Victory

An Angel robed in white array
Had rent the rock and sat thereon.

E. T. F.

We must not stand to gaze too long
Though on unfolded Heaven our gaze we bend,
Where lost behind the bright angelic throng
We see Christ's entering triumph slow ascend.

No fear but we shall soon behold,
Faster than now it fades, that gleam revive,
When issuing from His Cloud of fiery gold
Our wasted frames feel the true Sun, and live.

J. KEBLE.



St. Peter's, Perugia.

ANGEL AT THE EMPTY TOMB.

(Fresco, Assisi.)

Angels of Victory

‘ THY will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.’ Thus our Blessed Lord teaches us to pray, and to learn by and in this prayer to live our spiritual life on earth as the Holy Angels live their spiritual life in heaven. We know that this divinely given example of the holy angels applies to the whole of our spiritual life ; but it is in reference to one particular aspect of it that we seek to apply it now in the short study which is before us—namely, to that of the ‘ victories ’ of our spiritual life. In what sense are the holy angels, in this, our example ? In what sense are they ‘ angels of victory ’ to us ?

In order to answer this question, we must, first of all, ask, ‘ In what, exactly, do the spiritual victories of the Christian consist ? ’ The Christian’s victories consist in those of His Lord and Master. What were Christ’s victories are his. Nay, more: the Christian’s victories are those of the Master, fought and wrought out again in the soul of the disciple. Our line of thought, then, will resolve itself, first, into the enquiry, ‘ What are the victories of Christ which He still repeats and achieves in Christian

souls ?' Then into asking, 'What part did and do the holy angels take in these victories ?' And so to the ascertainment, in some measure, of how we are to follow their example.

What, then, are the victories of Christ which He still repeats in the souls of His disciples ?

Our Lord's victories were threefold.

First, there were what we may term His 'victories of solitude.' At the beginning of His career we suddenly find Him as a mighty personality standing forth and heralding the proclamation, 'Repent : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'¹ ; and immediately gaining a victory far and wide over long-settled ignorance, over sickness, disease, torment, devils, and lunacy ; while He stirs, through all the country round, an awakening from indifference and sloth. But when we look at the record, we notice that these great deeds were the fruit of long and hidden retirement, not only of the retirement of His thirty years of a quiet, obscure bringing up, but also of one specially and divinely chosen, in the lonely barren solitudes of the wilderness, where no human being was near, where all that Satan could possibly offer to tempt Him from His course had been unflinchingly, undistractedly faced and weighed and met ; and where, without the contracting of a single stain, all the tempter's offers had been deliberately and finally refused. It was

¹ St. Matthew iv. 17.

here that the after-triumph was, in reality, won. The outward victories of His activities were the fruit of the secret victories of His solitude. And we see Him repeating this great method of victory, in souls that are His, now. We have known what it is to be sometimes taken by surprise at the fine spiritual triumph of a person from whom we had not been led to expect it. He found himself in some great crisis. It had immediately to be met, and, to the wondering admiration of friends, he rose supremely to it. There was no hesitation. The great thing to be done he did ; and all concerned became aware that a pitched battle had been fought and a great victor become known. But his victory was not, in reality, won either there or then. It had already been previously won in many a secret struggle and many a secret victory, seen only by the eye of God and by the surrounding holy angels. There temptation, in many a guise and attack, had been met and faced and overthrown. Then when that battle had again to be fought before the eyes of the whole world, the enemy was an enemy already defeated, and the victor was already a victor before ever the struggle commenced. Thus does Christ still achieve His same victories of solitude in the life of the soul of His disciple.

And what is the part which the holy angels take in this ? We read that in the victory of our Lord in the solitude of the wilderness they 'came and

ministered unto Him.'¹ They brought to Him, in His sacred Humanity, the comforting sense that heaven's sympathy was with Him. They thronged Him with their joyous congratulations. They had intently watched every phase of the struggle,² feeling their own deep personal concern in it all, and that the question of human souls ever entering into companionship with them in their ranks depended upon its issue. Then, when at last the full victory was gained, it was their unbounded joy to fly to him with food and refreshment, and to earn for themselves the title of being 'angels of the victory of His solitude.'

‘ and straight a fiery globe
 Of Angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
 Who on their plummy vans received Him soft
 From His uneasy station, and upbore,
 As on a floating couch, through the blithe air ;
 Then, in a flowery valley, set Him down
 On a green bank, and set before Him spread
 A table of celestial food, divine
 Ambrosial fruits fetched from the Tree of Life,
 And from the Fount of Life ambrosial drink,
 That soon refreshed Him wearied, and repaired
 What hunger, if aught hunger, had impaired,
 Or thirst ; and, as He fed, Angelic quires
 Sung heavenly anthems of His victory
 Over temptation and the Tempter proud :

¹ St. Matthew iv. 11.

² C.f. St. Mark i. 13.

Thus they the Son of God, our Saviour meek,
Sung Victor, and, from heavenly feast refreshed,
Brought on His way with joy.'¹

These ministrations they still repeat, in many wonderful ways, to the soul of the Christian disciple. Often, in our spiritual struggles, do their voices come, bringing us a heavenly joy and consolation when no other aid is near. And whenever we, too, go to a soul who, after long and patient secret trial, has come forth gloriously from a spiritual triumph, and then and there offer him our sympathy and congratulations, and make him feel that we regard his triumph as our own, and, should he have personally suffered in the conflict, render him what practical help we can give him,—then we also are, on earth, what the angels of this victory are in heaven.

Gethsemane, too, as well as the wilderness, was the scene of a mighty victory of solitude. It was there that the battle of Calvary was really fought and won. 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done,'² was the final victor-cry of the last great struggle of the Cross, the agony of which made His sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.³ Nor was this victory unaccompanied by angelic ministration. We read that 'there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him'⁴; the

¹ *Paradise Regained*, iv. 581.

² St. Matthew xxvi. 42.

³ St. Luke xxii. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxii. 43.

Greek word for 'strengthening Him' being a special word, seeming to imply that the angel *imparted* to him, in His sacred Humanity, some special strength and support which went with Him through the terrible hours of the Cross right onward into Paradise. And such angels minister to our Lord in this same way when He repeats His victory of Gethsemane in His martyrs and in His saints. The ecclesiastical historian Socrates, who wrote about the year 400 A.D., tells us that the Emperor Julian commanded Sallust the Praetorian prefect to seize and make examples of the Christians, and that on a young man named Theodore, who was brought before him, he inflicted a variety of tortures, causing his person to be so lacerated that at last he was released from further punishment, under the supposition that he could not possibly survive the sufferings he had endured. God, however, preserved him, so that he long outlived those torments. And Socrates states that Rufinus, also the author of an ecclesiastical history, himself conversed with Theodore some time afterwards, and upon his inquiring of him whether in the process of his scourging and racking he had not felt the most agonising pains, his answer was, that a young man stood by him in his torments, who both wiped off the sweat which was produced by the acuteness of the ordeal through which he was passing, and at the same time strengthened his mind, so that he

made this time of trial a season of rapture rather than of suffering.¹ And we know of some such instances of angelic ministrations from our own experiences also. A certain mother, not very long ago, had a child of whom she was dotingly fond. This little lad, through an accident, suffered a severe burning from which he not long afterwards died. When the clergyman of the parish called he expected to find the mother heartbroken and crushed. To his surprise, however, he found her quite calm and collected, and she explained to him that while she had been weeping bitterly beside the cot, her little boy had suddenly exclaimed, 'Mother, don't you see the beautiful man who is standing there and waiting for me?' Again and again, she said, had the child persisted in saying that 'a beautiful man' was waiting for him, so that he seemed ready and even anxious to go to him. It was this which had made the mother's heart become so strangely calmed and cheered.

Yes ; there are still the angels of the victories of our Gethsemanes ; and those souls do God's will on earth as such angels do it in heaven, who impart consolations to all who are suffering in communion with Christ ; upholding them with cheering words ; inspiring and sustaining them with thoughts of the power which comes from accepting God's Will ; aiding them with their prayers ; administering, with

¹ Socrates, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. 19, A.D. 362.

these, to their bodily comforts ; smoothing the pillow and the bed of pain ; watching with them through the long, agonising hours of the night ; and giving them that companionship for which they crave, ‘ until the day break, and the shadows flee away.’

Anyone who has been round a hospital at midnight, listened to the heavy breathing in the silent wards from one bed here and from another bed there, and has heard, in the stillness, a groan, with perhaps the very words of the Redeemer, ‘ Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done,’ and has then seen suddenly, behind the dim light in the centre of the ward, emerging from the darkness beyond, a white-draped figure, swiftly, immediately at hand, soothing and ministering to the sufferer,— knows, and thanks God he knows, that while we still have our Gethsemanes on earth, we still have also those who follow the angels in hovering over them, and who aid in the victories that are won there, victories which bring forth their fruit either in sanctified lives of restored health upon earth, or in purified souls gone forward into Paradise.

But our Lord had not only His victories of solitude, as from the wilderness and Gethsemane : He had also the open victory of His Resurrection, the victory of emancipated spiritual life. After His

enemies had put forth every effort to keep Him in the hidden solitude of His grave ; after taking Him captive ; binding Him ; beating Him down ; handing Him over to the heathen civil power ; nailing Him to a cross ; burying Him in a sepulchre ; laying a great stone upon the mouth of it ; sealing it, and placing a guard of soldiers to watch it ;—He yet calmly, supremely rose above it all, and came forth, and, unimpeded, continued His victorious course, appearing where and when He chose to His revived and wondering disciples. It was the mightiest victory of all that He had won upon earth. And we see Him spiritually repeating this whenever He raises a soul from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness and brings forth by His Grace the Divine image from out that soul, notwithstanding every effort of the world, the flesh, and the devil to keep it buried in the grave of earthliness and sin, and notwithstanding all opposition to its ever escaping from that condition ; notwithstanding, too, its own fearfulness and shrinking from breaking loose into an unknown environment, although that environment be better and higher than any it has had before ; and when, although every power of the enemy has been arrayed against it, He yet leads it forth, calmly and supremely triumphant, and bids it move unlet and unhindered in the everlasting peace of His all-pervading presence.

And innumerable are the companies of angels who minister to Christ's glory in these Resurrection victories. It is impossible to define exactly their manifold appearances at the open tomb as recorded by the Evangelists. Amid so much that was supernatural they do not appear to make any attempt to give us exactitude of description. They simply show us that angels were in the tomb; were all about the tomb; were outside the tomb. Instead of occupying ourselves, therefore, with the various harmonistic schemes that have been put forward in reference to the well-known controversy as to the number of the angelic appearances on the Resurrection morn, we shall be wiser to remind ourselves of the words of Lessing, who wrote: 'Cold discrepancy-mongers, do ye not then see that the Evangelists do not count the angels? The whole grave, the whole region round about the grave was invisibly swarming with angels. There were not only two angels, like a pair of grenadiers who are left behind in front of the quarters of the departed general; there were millions of them; they appeared not always one and the same, not always the same two; sometimes this one appeared, sometimes that; sometimes alone, sometimes in company; sometimes they said this, sometimes they said that.'¹

It would seem that our Lord (with a certain parallel to His Birth) rose while the tomb was

¹ Quoted in Lange's *Commentary*.

closed and sealed, by His own Divine and inherent power alone, and that it was not for the sake of His escaping from it, Who had already left it, but for the sake of its emptiness being known to devout and earnest seekers after Christ, that an angel descended from heaven with lightning speed, and rendering, without smiting them, the terrified keepers as powerless as if they were dead, hurled the great stone away, and, by seating himself upon it, dared any foe to replace it.¹ Others of the angelic band explained to dazed and perplexed disciples something of the mystery of what had taken place, and directed them to where they would meet the Lord and see Him in His glorified Body²; while they, these celestial beings themselves, with their buoyant energies, their undecaying bodies, their fadeless beauty and power, their supernatural brightness, exemplified that spiritual state which all who follow the Victorious Risen One would likewise inherit when they, too, in Him, rose from the dead. And whenever our Blessed Lord repeats this victory spiritually in human souls, they still administer their heavenly aid in many a removal of physical and earthly opposition which the enemy tries to advance. Those who have been engaged in the Resurrection work of Missions know of wonderful instances of such helps from the holy angels; no

¹ St. Matthew xxviii. 1-6.

² St. Luke xxiv. 3-7; St. Mark xvi. 7.

less wonderful than the loosening of St. Peter's chains and the opening of the iron gates.

And whenever members of Christ's Church press around, with earnest interest, this emancipating and resurrection work, and, without interfering with what God's Grace alone can do in bringing forth submerged spirits into His light and life, strike, by a holy indignation, terror and shame into all that would oppose the testimony of that release; whenever Christian workers boldly come forward to remove, and keep removed, all obstacles evilly put in the way of such a testimony; whenever one who bears the name of Christ directs, with all the knowledge which he possesses, to where the spiritual life is to be found, while he himself, and in himself, bears witness to its glory and gives aid to its being furthered;—there can we see being done on earth, in the spiritual emancipation of souls, what the angels of this victory have done, and are doing, from the heavenly realms above.

But our Lord's victories did not cease even at His Resurrection. He has not only His victories of solitude and His victories of spiritual emancipation; He has also, as regards His sacred Humanity, His victories of growth and progress in glorification. If His Resurrection was a victory over all that would have hindered His coming forth into newness of life, His Ascension is the victory of an ever-upward advance of that new life, to the right hand

of the Majesty on high. During the nine days of His leaving the earth and His sending down the Holy Spirit from above, He 'passed through the heavens,'¹ that is, the nine winged orders of the heavenly hosts. As He ascended up on high, each choir of these celestial hierarchies received Him into its ranks, offering Him the special gifts it possessed, that He might fill all things with Himself, and then handed Him on to the rank next above it with the demand, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in,' while they added the affirmation, the affirmation of a now newly experienced knowledge, 'The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory,' when challenged as to *Who* that King of Glory was.²

Identifying Himself, first, with the 'Angels,' who bring to Him the graces with which they reflect, in their manifold ways, the attributes of the Deity, He is passed on by them to the 'Archangels.' Receiving from these their special gifts of supervision, He is brought by them, in turn, to the 'Principalities' or 'Princedoms,' with their powers of spiritual initiation³; and then, leaving this highest order of the Administrative Choir, He passes into the Choir above, that of the Regulative angels, which expectantly now awaits Him. Here, first,

¹ Heb. iv. 14, R.V.

² Psalm xxiv. 9, 10.

³ See Chapter iv. p. 86.

the 'Powers,' whose streams of holy influences connect their Choir with the one below, welcome Him into their midst. Receiving these, He is passed, uplifted by them, into the rank of the 'Virtues,' whose strength is now laid at His feet in both lowly and joyful adoration. Taking their gift, He is escorted by them to the 'Dominions,' or 'Headships,' the highest order of this central triad, whose talents have for ever fitted them for forming and establishing founts of regulative power and control. Gathering these into Himself, He now ascends to the highest Choir of all, the threefold orders of the Contemplative angels. Here the 'Thrones' wait first to greet Him and to surrender to Him their powers for working out bases for the regulative administrations of the Choir He has just left, which they are continually providing out of the exalted fruit of a wrapt and ceaseless contemplation. Accepting these their powers, He is conveyed by them to the 'Cherubim,' who present to Him that knowledge which specially is theirs, as they then usher Him into the highest order of all, that innermost circle which surrounds the Throne of God, the sacred band of the Seraphim, who, from age to age, contemplate and absorb, in so far as their beings can contain it, that Holiness which constitutes the very central attribute of the Godhead. Possessed of this crowning vocation of all the heavenly hosts, He steps from this final stage of

the angelic stairway to Heaven, and, leaving behind Him all creaturely existence, and every name that is named, He passes at last, solitary, supreme, alone, the only begotten Son, to the right Hand of the Father. Beyond this there can be no further advance. It is the summit and crown of all.

In this ascending procession to His furthest possible victory, there was not one angel from one order of one choir who did not yield to Him his every ministering aid. All the heavenly hosts were 'Angels of' this 'Victory.' One and all they gave themselves up to Him, that it might be through each one of them He ascended to the place prepared for Him. And eagerly do they still yield this aid to every soul that, following Jesus, is carried by them to another bosom now than that of Abraham. And it is because they know so well this roadway of the Saviour that

'The Angels from their throne on high
Look down on us with pitying eye,
That where we are but parting guests
We build such strong and solid nests ;
And where we hope to dwell for aye
We scarce take heed a stone to lay.'¹

And every child of God who, reflecting this 'pitying eye,' yields himself, wheresoever he can, to the spiritual ascension of a soul raised from a grave of worldliness and sin ; who freely affords that emancipated one

On the wall of a house in Dublin.

every aid of his own spiritual experiences, allowing that one, as we sometimes express it, 'to be taken up with him,' until, finding yet better aids still, and going from strength to strength, that soul at last appears before God in Zion;—every such child of God is, even as are those in heaven, an 'Angel of' this final 'Victory' of the Ascension.

C. H. S.

CHAPTER XV

The Voice of the Archangel

Even now the Angels are moving to and fro throughout the realms of the living and of the dead, to prepare for that supreme moment, when, in the counsels of God, all will at last be ready, and the Judge will be seen on the clouds of Heaven.

H. P. LIDDON.



ANGELS IN THE LANTERN. ELY CATHEDRAL.

(*T. Gambier Parry, 1873.*)

The Voice of the Archangel

' THEN COMETH THE END '

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.—1 Thessalonians iv. 16.

THE shout and the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet are the signals of the King's Return, and of the consummation of the Kingdom of Grace.

In the Apostle's conception all history is crowded into one swift scene. Time and the course of the world are over as if they were but an hour, a little while, a passing shadow of darkness; and the morning has stolen quickly upon the night. It breaks, not with the wonted signals of time or of earthly routine, not with the cock-crowing, or with the voice of some watchman going his round and saying 'The morning cometh,' but with a new sound from another world, a new and mighty voice, and a new and strange instrument that has never fallen on the ear of man until now, the shout of the Lord, and, in prompt answer, the

voice of the archangel and the sound of the trump of God.

They are at once signals and a command ; signals of a Presence and a command that death itself cannot refuse to obey. Signals of a Presence ; but of what Presence ? The Presence of the Lord, the Lamb that was slain, yet now no more a Lamb in weakness but the Lord of all power and might ; the Son of Man not now under humiliation but glorified.

He who on earth might have prayed for twelve legions of angels and ' presently ' they should have been at His side, is now come, not with twelve legions, but with ' all the holy angels ' with Him. He has not prayed for them as a suppliant in need, as one in weakness wanting succour ; He has commanded and they have obeyed, He has called and they have answered ; they come in unnumbered multitudes, and yet not unnumbered, for they are in due rank and order and they move without confusion or uncertainty, each one in his place, impelled by the unity of the One Spirit within them, without let or hindrance, with no hesitation or doubt or delay, none hampering the work of another, none charged with more than he can do, none checked by another's mistake or weakness or failure, none making a mistake or falling into a failure of his own, but all of them robed in excellent

strength and proceeding exactly to that end to which the Spirit moves them.

‘The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven.’ He is the centre of that host and on Him they all attend. Hitherto their work has been to minister to the heirs of salvation, to contend with the powers of evil, or to serve before the Throne of the Most High. Part of their ministry has been to carry on the operations of Nature, to fashion and control all that is visible and audible; and also many things to us invisible and inaudible. Who can tell the number of those hosts, far exceeding the number of the hosts of mankind? Every soul of the redeemed has his guardian angel, and yet the hosts of God fulfil many other tasks than that of guardianship. How shall we form any conception answering to the thought suggested by the Apostle’s words? The very title Archangel implies the presence of subordinate hosts, even as in the armies of this world the title Commander implies the presence of those whom he commands. The angels and archangels who attend the Lord come not as men that move from one place to another with slowness and difficulty, and who leave one place empty when they fill another. Heaven is not emptied when earth is filled. Rather the thought is that of revelation, of heaven unfolded, of heaven and earth united in one glorious outpouring of living

light, for, as the Psalmist says, God's very chariots are of angels.¹ Let us figure to ourselves the idea of the Lord coming in the central blue of the sky, coming with clouds, white clouds as pure as snow, and yet a ring of dark clouds also, the tokens of his anger against sin. And let us think of rays of light emanating from that central point and reaching to earth around its whole horizon, each ray distinct and yet touching other rays on either side like the colours in the rainbow, and falling not in straight lines but following what seems to us the curve of the sky, till they descend to the very horizon's rim. Let us conceive that every one of these rays, so converging to that upper centre, consists of a multitude of angels, turning inwards towards the earth and looking from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, throbbing as it were with love and strength and obedience, ready to do whatsoever their Lord shall say, or only signify to them with a look or by a movement.

Let us conceive of their work of separation, of dividing the tares from the wheat, of gathering God's elect from the four winds, of ending the world's confusion, of making it finally and for ever impossible that evil shall again interfere with and trammel good. Let us think of their irresistible power, whether singly or in hosts; and dream of what it shall be directed to hereafter, when they

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 17.

shall turn to new tasks, to new works which no language or thought of man has yet conceived or told of, the employments of God when the dispensation of Grace has been fulfilled, and a new page in the Book of Eternal Life is unfolded.

There will be no carrying of souls into Abraham's bosom, for all shall be there in that day ; no speaking words of help to pilgrims on earth, for all shall be at home in their Father's house ; no waiting at the door of a prison or of any earthly dwelling, for all shall have been delivered ; no guarding of sepulchres, for all shall have risen from the dead ; no disputing about the bodies of the saints, for not one shall have been left in the dust ; no troubling of waters to heal disease, for all shall have been made whole of whatsoever disease they had ; and the multitude of the saved shall be glorified with health, and with perfection of every faculty both of soul and body, and be found each one walking in his uprightness.

The Judgment is what we look on to, with fear and trembling, from our earthly life ; but not with fear and trembling only. In proportion as God gives to any soul the gift of love, that love casts out fear, in the certitude of His mercy and grace, and looks on through the Judgment to that which will follow it, when the great trial and crisis are passed, and the Omnipotent Love of the Father pours itself out upon the new heavens and the new

earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and righteousness only.

Of what use are such contemplations ?

The question is a natural one, for in the most sacred things we long above all for the justification of truth, and fear more than anything else the danger of mere indulgence and reverie.

But the question is answered by the Apostle himself. 'Wherefore *comfort* one another with these words.' The use of such contemplations, when truly based, is comfort, *παράκλησις*, the very work of the Holy Spirit, from the nature of which one of His most glorious names is derived. The underlying thought is of that age-long weakness that comes over the heart of man when he thinks, without comfort, 'concerning them that are fallen asleep.' Man has conquered many enemies, but one has seemed invincible. One has seemed to be possessed of a strength that has worn out our most patient skill and dashed our last hope to the ground. When it has come to a trial of strength with that last enemy, man has seemed to himself defeated, to be like a regiment ordered to charge upon an impossible position, and to find himself mown down without getting foothold in the citadel at all. Upon that consciousness have waited fear, despair, recklessness, bitter and hopeless grief. What shall turn the scale in the soul's battle ? Only some adequate idea, some comforting thought, born of faith, that

the power of this last enemy is not so invincible as man has feared.

Such an idea is that of the risen Captain of our salvation attended by innumerable hosts of deathless servants, greater in power and might (*ἰσχύϊ καὶ δυνάμει*) than mortal man, and able to subdue all things to Himself, dealing with death as a part of creation not unforeseen, not unreckoned for, not unprovided against, but met and overcome with powers more than equal to the demand upon them. From the Divine side death must have a quite different appearance from that which it has to us who see it from the human side alone.

The thought of the Lord's Return with the hosts of the Angels and the Archangels is a spiritual lever by which we are lifted to a new point of view. Let us use it as the Apostle bids us use it, to 'comfort one another with these words'; that so we may be 'steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

W. H. D.

'SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN.

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.'

O DAY of life, of light, of love !
 The only day dealt from above !
 A day so fresh, so bright, so brave,¹
 'Twill show us each forgotten grave,
 And make the dead, like flowers, arise,
 Youthful and fair, to see new skies.
 All other days, compared to thee,
 Are but Light's weak minority ;
 They are but veils and cypress,² drawn
 Like clouds, before thy glorious dawn.
 O come ! arise ! shine ! do not stay,
 Dearly loved Day !
 The fields are long since white, and I
 With earnest groans for freedom cry ;
 My fellow creatures too say, Come !
 And stones, though speechless, are not dumb.
 When shall we hear that glorious voice
 Of life and joys ?
 That voice which to each secret bed
 Of my Lord's dead
 Shall bring true day, and make dust see
 The way to immortality ?
 When shall those first white pilgrims rise,
 Whose holy happy histories
 —Because they sleep so long—some men
 Count but the blots of a vain pen ?
 Dear Lord ! make haste !

Henry Vaughan.

Brave, splendid.

² *Cypress, crape.*

So far of the Angels, of whose glory may God of His mercy make us partakers ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

St. Thomas Aquinas.

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